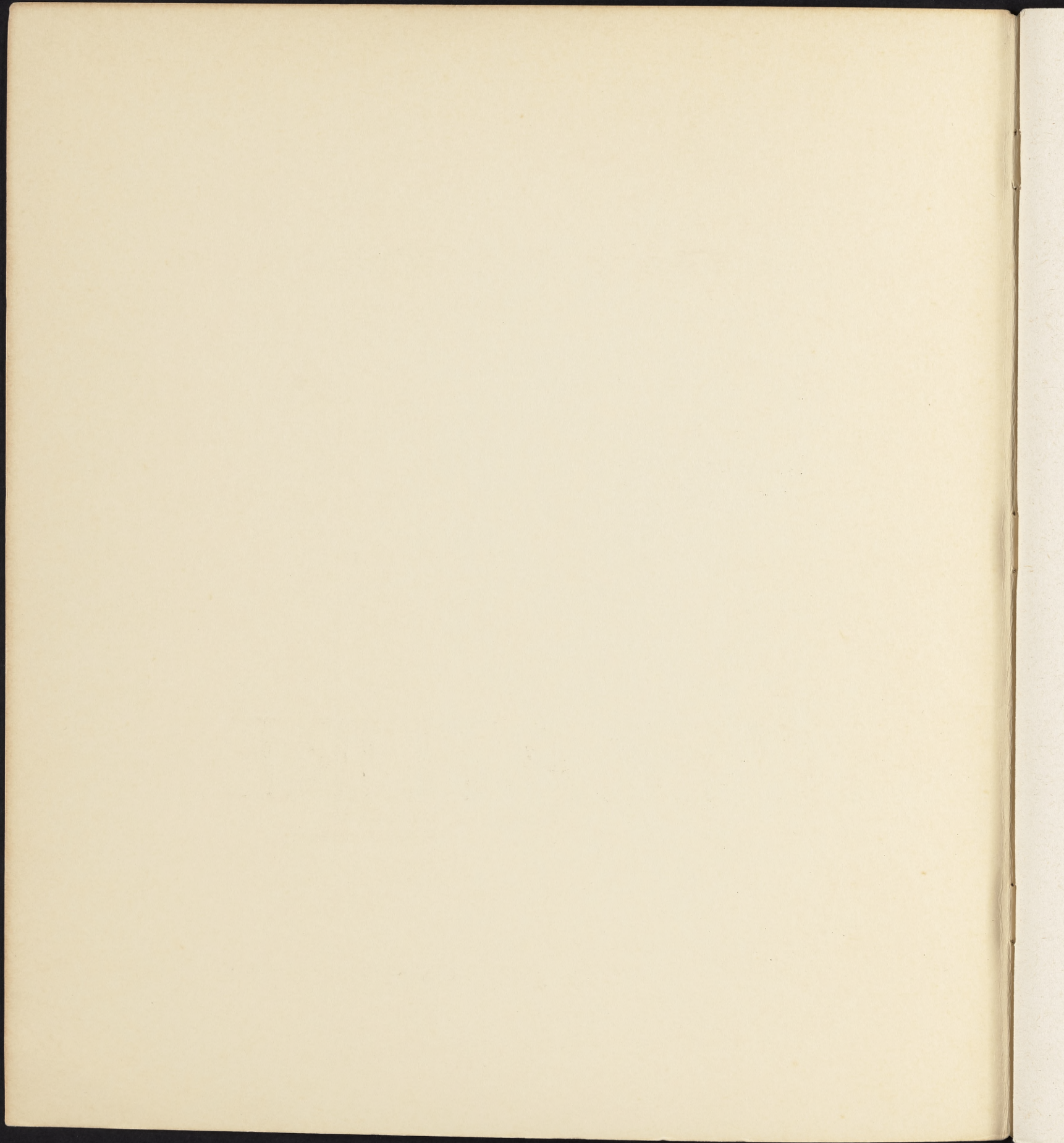


GAY
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LITERATURE

WINTER 1975/NUMBER ONE



Gay Literature

A NEW JOURNAL

30705

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MANUSCRIPT OPPORTUNITIES...

ATTENTION: GAY SCHOLARS

Manuscripts are being sought for **The Gay Academic: A Multidisciplinary Collection of Essays by Gay Academics Writing as Gay Academics, etc.**

Each essay in **The Gay Academic** will be a showcase of the positive achievements of a Gay scholar when she or he uses her or his special vantage as a Gay person in pursuing a specific discipline. The volume will celebrate the honesty and insight made possible by open Gay sexual orientation.

Interested scholars will find it useful to query with their plans before beginning their manuscripts. Manuscripts should be from 10 to 30 typed pages and should conform to the **MLA Style Sheet, Second Edition**. Writers whose essays are accepted may elect either a modest payment or a pro rata share of the annual royalties. Deadline for submissions is January 1, 1975. They should be sent with a stamped addressed envelope to:

Dr. Louie Crew

Fort Valley State College, Box 1203

Fort Valley, Georgia 31030



Gay Pride March, June, 1974, San Francisco

Apologia

BY THE EDITOR

GAY LITERATURE exists because the work of gay liberation is far from done. Yes, it is moving out of its early leftist political stage into something inviting a broader participation. (But just in case there's any doubt that political action is still very much needed, let me point out that the first typesetters for this magazine refused--as Mormons--to typeset the copy because it is about homosexuals. Ignorance, oppression, and discrimination are very much alive.) The policy of this magazine will be muted politically. I believe that most people are not very political; they certainly are not revolutionaries--about as revolutionary as Cinderella. Calls to arms for homosexuals are impractical.

GAY LITERATURE is devoted to the belief that a Gay Renaissance is upon us. There is reason to have great hope about the future. Through quality writing (short stories and essays and occasional non-obscurantist poems) the realms of education can be expanded. I think that there is a decided interaction between art and life and therefore the images of gay people in literature influence the way they are viewed in society. This magazine is devoted to truthful images about gay people--male and female, young and old. We don't have to glorify ourselves. That primitive stage of propaganda is no longer necessary, except possibly on television. I want to publish **honest, artistic** material. If that sometimes means less-than-flattering pictures of gay persons, all the better. We are now self-assured and strong enough to withstand criticism--because we're right and "they're" wrong!

GAY LITERATURE wants to present--in enduring forms--the specific issues and problems of homosexuals, such as Vice Squad entrapment and harassment. At the same time this magazine wants to present universal issues in terms of the gay people who experience them.

In other words, this is a publication designed to capture what is unique about us and what is true of all human beings. Since most mass market magazines are closed to gay material of any kind, there is a great need for a magazine like this one.

Gayness is as diverse in its personalities as heterosexuality is. I hope this arresting breadth and depth will not be lost as we move more into the mainstream.

Unfortunately homosexuality encounters enormous taboos. The homosexual has to **justify** his existence the way nobody else does. The same goes for gay literature. Even gay people seem, at times, to think that there's something inferior about writing about ourselves--as though heterosexual romance and such are more important merely because they are the concerns of a bigger portion of the species. As if straight concerns haven't been done to death! But I fully accept gay experiences as every bit as notable and significant as those of other human beings. No one demands why there should be an Irish Renaissance, no one spurns a Black Renaissance. Well, it's time people stopped questioning the Gay Renaissance. Gay people's experiences are as worthy of literary treatment as any others'--more so, because they have been intimidated, almost obliterated, by stupid and cruel taboo for so very long.

I hope that this magazine will be read by all sorts of people--gay and straight, black, yellow, and red, rich and poor. Gayness is a great subject! Long may it thrive!

Daniel Curzon
English Department
State University of
California
Fresno, California
93740

Dr. Frankel,

Where Are You?

BY ALLEN YOUNG

(NOTE: In the following article, some names have been changed. Everything else is true.)

I

I first met Dr. Frankel at Green Acres, a medium-sized resort hotel in the Catskill Mountains. Green Acres specialized in family vacations, and one of its features was a dining room especially for little babies. That's where I worked, as a waiter.

The parents--sometimes the mother, sometimes the father, sometimes both--would come with their small child and tell me what they wanted. It was my job to fetch the baby-food jars and heat them up, or dish out the chocolate pudding, or go into the big kitchen to get the tiny portions of meat and vegetables for the babies old enough to chew. Dan Frankel and his wife Ruth were my favorite guests in three summers of being a waiter in that dining room.

The year was 1958. It was the summer between my senior year in high school and my freshman year at Columbia. I was seventeen years old, grasping for a sexual identity in the sexually charged atmosphere of a resort hotel in the summertime. That summer, I tried to forget about the sex I had had with my high school (boy) friends, and I made a play for a girl, a sexy fourteen-year-old named Helene, who had a "bad

reputation." I double dated a lot with Roy, a handsome WASP who resembled James Dean and possessed a certain charm, mystery and beauty I unavoidably associate with gentiles. He made out in the front seat with Riva and I made out in the back seat with Helene. But I was in love with Roy.

I remember Dan Frankel as a solidly built, handsome man, mild-mannered, gentle, with a warm, kindly smile. Ruth Frankel was active and athletic, with lively, sparkling eyes and reddish hair she wore in an informal cut. Both Frankels stood out among the guests at Green Acres for their wit, beauty, and intelligence, but most of all for their left-wing political views. It was the twilight of McCarthyism and a few of us at the hotel, including the owners, thought of ourselves as "progressives," a beleaguered minority in a time when most Americans who should have known better were apathetic or scared to death. The Frankels were progressives, too, and much of my leisure time during their three-week stay was spent talking politics with them. One of the things we talked about was the politics of the medical profession. We all believed in socialized medicine, of course. Dan Frankel told me he belonged to a socialistically inclined group, the Physicians Forum, which spoke with a small but courageous voice against the powerful and reactionary American Medical Association.

One thing I didn't talk about was Dr. Frankel's field of medicine. I didn't know much about it, and the little bit I did know vaguely confused or frightened me. Dr. Frankel was a psychiatrist. A psychoanalyst.

II

In the fall of 1958, I began college and became a resident of Manhattan. I kept in touch with the Frankels. I was infatuated with them and wanted to be their friend. On several occasions, I was their guest for the evening, though come to think of it I was never asked to their home. They took me to see socially conscious theatre (Sean O'Casey, etc.) and we went out to eat at the Russian Tea Room. Around this time, I became

active in the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, known familiarly as "Sane," a political group that people like the Frankels and myself supported.

One night I went with some college friends to a huge rally at Madison Square Garden. Sponsored by Sane, it was one of the largest gatherings of leftists since the Henry Wallace presidential campaign a decade previous. Thousands of us filled the Garden to cheer speakers who denounced the Cold War and the continued testing of hydrogen bombs. A team of young comics provided a light moment of anti-establishment humor during the rally. They were very funny and made everybody laugh a lot. Their names were Bill Masters and Lisa April--later they became famous.

III

The months and the years passed, and gradually lost touch with Dan and Ruth Frankel. I fell in love with Wayne, my college roommate, and we slept together. It was frightening and it was blissful. It lasted for two years, and then it was over. We were both going to become straight.

I went home for a visit. "Did you hear?" someone I knew from Green Acres asked me. "Dan Frankel's wife committed suicide." I could not find out the details, but I got the gist of the story. Dr. Frankel had fallen in love with one of his patients, and he had left his wife and the children. His wife's response was suicide. The patient was Lisa April. The news was shocking. Dan and Ruth Frankel were, in my eyes, the ideal couple, the epitome of a beautiful happily married couple.

IV

In the 1950's, a group called the Weavers, a quartet specializing in folk songs and topical-political songs, was quite well known. The group consisted of Lee Hays, Fred Hellerman, Ronnie Gilbert and Pete Seeger, all of them "progressives." On one of their records, Lee

Hays sings an old gospel song entitled, "I Don't Want to Get Adjusted." He introduced the song in his deep bass voice: "I want to dedicate this song to a psychiatrist friend of mine--whom I see only socially of course" (laughter). The tittering in the audience doubtlessly reflected the fact that the Old Left was ambivalent about psychoanalysis and the man who started it all, Sigmund Freud. On the one hand, communist dogma was opposed to Freud in particular and to the adjustment theory of therapy in general. A "good communist," presumably, could not be psychologically maladjusted. The cure for neurosis lay in the Party or the Revolution, and "mental disease" was a product of capitalism. But Communists who could afford it, like most "rational," scientifically minded middle-class people of the times, thought that Freud and his followers had something to offer. My friend Jonah has told me that his Old Left parents wanted to send him to a shrink because he was getting bad grades in school. By and large, however, psychiatrists were something to be ashamed of or to laugh at. I didn't fully understand the humor, and in any case I didn't know anyone who went to one. And the Weaver's voices rang out "I don't want to get adjusted to this world, to this world; I got a home that's so much better I'm gonna get to sooner or later, I don't want to get adjusted to this world!"

V

In the summer of 1963, I was twenty-two and trying very hard to be straight. On the surface I was doing pretty well. For the first time in my life, I felt as if I belonged to this world. I had a steady girlfriend named Nancy and we were a happy couple. We saw each other on weekends (Cambridge or New York) and we fucked two or three times a day. Two of my best friends from college also had girlfriends. We were three happy couples. We went to the Newport Folk Festival and heard Bob Dylan. One afternoon, before the concert began, he just sat down under a tree in a park in Newport and played and sang.

Maybe twenty-five or thirty people stood around and listened. We were among them. In those days, Jean Ritchie was a better known singer than Bob Dylan. Nancy and I slept on the beach, but I had trouble getting it hard and we didn't fuck until four in the morning. I blamed it on the semi-public sleeping arrangements, but deep down I knew there was another reason. Sometimes, I'd awaken lying next to Nancy and I'd realize that I just dreamed about my former boyfriend Wayne. One weekend, Nancy came to New York to spend a whole week with me. By the time Tuesday night came, I couldn't get an erection. We both cried. The next morning, I decided I needed a psychiatrist. I immediately thought of Dan Frankel. He'll help me, I decided. I called him, but his answering service told me he was on vacation. No, she didn't know when he'd be back or how I could reach him. I was desperate. I tried to fuck Nancy again, but it didn't work. I decided to tell her about Wayne, about my "past life" as a homosexual. Maybe purging myself of this secret will help, I thought. I was right. I got a hard-on and we fucked again. All was well. She was very understanding, and it seemed we could go on as before.

But inwardly, I thought I was still a faggot anyway. It was a moment of crucial self-awareness. I kept trying to get through to the miraculous Dr. Frankel; the desperation intensified. I didn't tell Nancy about that, however. Finally, Dr. Frankel's vacation was over. (Was he still going to Catskill Mountain resorts?) I spoke to him on the telephone and made an appointment to see him in his East Side office.

VI

As I entered the plush office, I thought about the dead Ruth Frankel. I already knew I would say nothing about her or about Lisa April. Dr. Frankel sat behind a huge desk in an office decorated with *objets d'art*. Soft carpeting covered the floor, and the proverbial couch was there. Would he ask me to use the couch, I

wondered, feeling uneasy. He gestured to a chair near his desk. I'd told him on the phone that I wanted to talk to him about a problem, and now I told him what it was: "I am a homosexual and I want to be cured." I told him about Wayne and about Nancy. I waited for his reply. I know what I expected, what I hoped he would say with his warm voice: "Yes, I can sure you. Come back tomorrow at 4," or something like that. I waited, afraid, but ready to put myself in his hands. I liked him and I trusted him. Little did I know that under the rules of psychoanalysis, this prior relationship absolutely ruled out any professional interaction between Dr. Frankel and me. He told me this right away. Of course he could not treat me because he already knew me socially, and besides I could never afford his fees. (I suspected that about the fees, but I assumed that Frankel the socialist would treat me for free or for less money.) Suddenly, he seemed cold and cruel. He showed no emotional response whatsoever to my awesome (to me) revelations about my homosexuality; it apparently meant nothing to him that he was the first person in the world (except for Wayne and Nancy) who "knew." He indicated vaguely that if I really wanted to, I could be cured and made into a good heterosexual. He never even as much as hinted at the possibility of my finding happiness by acknowledging and accepting my homosexuality. And I'd been too brainwashed to imagine such a possibility myself.

He referred me to a clinic uptown. "Let me know what happens," he said. I left his office shocked, bruised, disappointed and miserable.

VII

A few days later I sat at a typewriter and put the darkest secrets of my life on a piece of paper. It was an application to the psychoanalytical institute at the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, a school for shrinks. I wondered whether they would keep the application confidential, since I was enrolled in graduate school at Columbia at the time. But I

quickly put aside any doubts and decided to take my chances. This cure was very important to me. Several weeks after submitting the application, I got called for an interview. By then, my relationship with Nancy was drawing to a close, not so much because of sexual problems, but because we were headed to different parts of the world to continue our education.

"Maybe I should just go out and find a gay bar," I mused aloud at my interview. Somehow, I knew that gay bars could be found on the East Side and in Greenwich Village, though I'd never been to one. The shrink who was interviewing me urged me not to do it. He didn't say much of anything else. When he found out I was going to Brazil on a Fulbright scholarship in just a few months, however, he told me that my chances of being admitted to the clinic were nil. "You have to stay in New York for treatment for at least two years," he said. Later, when my application was formally rejected I went back to Dr. Frankel. It was to be our last encounter. It lasted only a minute or two. He reached up to a shelf and removed a book entitled **International Directory of Psychoanalysts** (or something like that). He found the listing for Brazil and gave me a name and address in Rio de Janeiro.

VIII

I arrived in the lush tropical environment of Rio de Janeiro in July, 1964. The day I arrived a beautiful Brazilian man named Ronaldo seduced me, and I thought I was in love, but by the end of the week he dropped me. I was, for him, just a trick. I was traumatized and ready for the cure again. So I looked up the Brazilian shrink whose name I had carefully hidden inside my wallet. He referred me to a colleague, and I began analysis-- five days a week, an hour a day. It was cheap enough for me to squeeze the fees out of my scholarship. It was so intense that I couldn't think of anything else except each day's session, and the one to come. When I wasn't on the shrink's couch, I was on the beach, watching the beautiful near-naked brown people, especially the men. My

Brazilian shrink was a boring, unattractive man who insisted I was in love with him even though he didn't interest me in the least. He followed the formulae of Freudian analysis to the letter, making any human interaction virtually impossible. When faced with the living reality of Rio's gay world, even with its woes and shortcomings, I knew that it made more sense than that shrink. Finally, I said no to this repression, and I came out. By October, I'd found gay friends and lovers, and my straight past was ancient history. I was discovering the joys of open gay love, and I couldn't get enough of it. I quit my Brazilian shrink, and I forgot about Dr. Frankel.

IX

In early 1970, I became very involved with the Gay Liberation Front of New York City. I finally told my straight friends that I was gay. The gay liberation movement spoke out against the oppressors, and high on the list stood the psychiatric establishment. I remembered Dr. Frankel again. Where was he? I wondered, suddenly remembering my past vulnerability and feeling strong and proud in contrast. I thought it would be a good idea for me to see him, to talk to him, to tell him what I had gone through and to see if he was open to the ideas of gay liberation. I wrote to him a very long letter, a heart-felt letter, of affection and subdued anger which the situation seemed to me to demand. It was a sincere quest for a dialogue.

I never got a reply.

X

I was moved to write all of this down after I saw "Day for Night," the highly acclaimed movie from the French director Francois Truffaut. It is a very entertaining film about the making of a movie. Truffaut shows us the comedy and tragedy that go on. Midway through the film, as if to check my pleasure, I suddenly remarked to myself that all of the romance and flirtation and sexual innuendo on the movie set were heterosexual.

"Hmm," I said to myself, "not very honest for a story about the people in the movie industry!" Just about then, a character named Alexandre, a middle-aged Romeo, goes to the airport for a rendezvous, and the person he meets turns out to be his young and gorgeous Italian lover. "Aha," observes one of the members of the cast, "it isn't a Lolita he went to meet but a Lorenzacchio." It is said without malice. Alexandre's homosexuality is not seen as anything very special. Nevertheless, I decided later, Truffaut treats Alexandre's gay relationship with less than a minute or two of dialogue, while several heterosexual relationships dominate the movie. The drama of Alexandre the homosexual actor is suppressed for obvious sexist-commercial reasons. And, to top it all off, Alexandre is dead in a car crash by the end of the film--typical fate, alas, for a homosexual character.

What does all this have to do, you may be asking, with Dr. Frankel? Well, two of the characters in the film are a nervous American movie star and her recently acquired psychiatrist-husband, one Dr. Nelson. The situation reminded me of Dan Frankel and the famous Lisa April. At first, I was certain that the movie star was modeled after Lisa April, with Dr. Nelson modeled after my old friend Dr. Frankel. But eventually, I realized that the situation--mature professional man marries gorgeous young thing--is really quite commonplace. At one point in the dialogue of the movie, someone notes that Dr. Nelson has left his wife and family--a life he'd built for twenty years--in order to marry the movie star. The audience of "Day for Night" is not told anything about Dr. Nelson's first wife. But I sat there thinking about Ruth Frankel and the awful fact of her suicide. I couldn't in all fairness blame Dan Frankel for the death of his wife. A man has the right to leave his wife. But Dan Frankel oozed the kind of strident male self-confidence that might make a woman feel she couldn't survive without him. And we live in a society where women are made to feel dependent. As a psychoanalyst, Frankel was

committed to the concept of sex roles, to sexual orthodoxy. Now I wonder where he stands today in the debate on homosexuality going on inside the American Psychiatric Association. I wonder deeply. I still get angry thinking about the unanswered letter I wrote him.

Dr. Frankel, where are you?

DR. FRANKEL, WHERE ARE YOU?

The Beggar

BY R. BRUCE MOODY

I set that one aside and I set

That one aside
Over there
Neither of you will do

Father I cannot hope to do battle with you and keep
winning, but only to curry favor for a truce that
will never come

Will
I still
Battle
That battle
Fight it in an obscure cell
Of my body
Dark banquetting hall its dishes
Sand

"I give up"
Can I say those words
Setting you aside
And with the rage of that goodbye win
All my way with
Power long impounded

Tank through
Battalions of flowers
Bull-eyed
No. My fight is
With my own silly noise. My fight
Is not to surrender to you

My lazy father who never raised your hand or
Your eyes

To me
But to surrender to that gray air
There
Across the street

And you
Oh wish me silence, friend,
And for your part tell me no more tales but
Leave me
Leave me be
A search unfounded, baseless
Treasure gone at
The X-marked sand crossed bones
For I curried favor with you and wished to fight
you all the time
Spoiling
Instead

All I did was ask you interested questions
You tell me all your secrets
And hear of mine
Not one
Then walk off without goodbye

I have to say it

But for me to have to say goodbye is
Never to say goodbye
I long to curry favor, father, friend
You loved me
Help me with your wishes
To leave you, you
Who long ago dismissed me

Rough Trade

Your hand so casually limp, your free arm
Flexing, your blackness creases moist light
Into warm folds. You smile. Sensing the rite,
I reach to touch your strong thighs furtively.
You jerk back. I stop. Into plastic balled,
Your eyes queer me. I want before back, not
Your fear. Cancel reach. Take as reason what
Was not a part of why: exchange "It all
Began when Mother pushed me off the pot".
For your surprise.

It seems he readjusts
With ease to intellectualize my lusts,
Indulges himself as victim. I plot
Safely only a case history now;
Then I fondly dared to touch him somehow.

— Louie Crew

Short Story

BY ROGER AUSTEN

He had the grace to smile;
I had the nerve to chase;
he had the sense to run--
and now I need that grace.

Yuletide Story

BY IAN YOUNG

"How can I be myself when I don't know who I am?"
Absurd. Touching, because he was young and beautiful,
and my friend. Years don't take long. He still asks questions.
When I talk about everything, he learns about me.
He talks only about himself and teaches me everything. We
get older, grow beards, shave them off, grow
them again.
wonder what to do with our hair.
Reading books and making allowances, we grow
vaguer and vaguer and the world misinterprets it and
begins to accept us. It is now clear
that we are not becoming anything. He has taken
no good photos for a year. All my poems
have been written, by myself or others.
We continue to live as we wish (more or less):
what Marx condescendingly called "déclassé
elements".
Regular jobs make us ill. The professions
hold no appeal for us.
Our bits of paper money are worth less and less.
Our gadgets become more elaborate.
Our bookshelves fill with erudition and high-class trash.
He still wears jeans and T-shirts.
I wear an anarchist flag in my lapel.
"What's that?" people say, and before
I can say "anarchist flag," they fall asleep.
Soon everyone will be asleep but us. Stepping
over the bodies as we walk around looking for things
to photograph: "Shh! or we'll wake everyone up. Quiet." Quiet.
Quietness feels comfortable with us, like
sleeping naked.
We love one another and have something in common
though we don't speak of it, but fall, slowly,
into categories the world will remember us by.
I'll make this my Christmas poem. Why not?
He will get snow in his beard, and presents--one from me--
and this, something that looks like a poem,
folds and tastes like a poem, and isn't,
put together by Ian Young in December of '74.

In Red Weather

(NOVEL IN PROGRESS)

BY DAN ALLEN

We left the **Vulcania** at Palma, Mallorca, for we had decided to start our trip around the world with a Hello-to-All-This homage to Robert Graves at Deya. Two days later I was standing by the beach, and Graves was saying, "There is no tide here."

"No tide! Abide! The sea has died!" I shouted, thrusting my right hand out toward the water.

Graves walked away.

"Rudy Wurlitzer, you are the instrument that America had to have made for it," I said, undeterred by the exit of Graves. "The ultimate organ. The crucial music." Rudy walked away.

"Tom, I realize that gin is cheaper than milk, but don't you think you're overdoing it?" Pete asked me.

"It's not gin. It's sangria. You saw me make it," I said. "Oh, the shores of Spain. We live in vain. Again. Will you never come again? The pain will remain. The shores of Spain."

Pete walked away.

After a week Deya was boring the shit out of me. I was less bored when I found one person who would talk with me. She was Incarnacion who spent all of each day scrubbing the tiles while she told me about Murcia during her golden maidenhood. I told her phantasamagorical tales of Texas and California in a Spanish she considered sweet and adventuresome. And she was very fond of my sangria, half gin, half tinto wine and any lemons or oranges that happened to be handy in the garden.

"Hector rode a red mare," she told me. "He was fleet as a steed on the wide streets of Murcia. He took my soul from me the moment I saw him ride beside the roses, roses bigger than grapefruits."

"My father rode a horse too," I said, "a horse

as white as the **sabanas** after they have been washed and dried by you in the sun of gold."

"Does your father still live?" she asked, rising from the floor to drink some more of my punch.

"Oh, yes, and now he rides a yellow horse. When the hills are covered with bluebonnets and Indian blankets and white nettle blossoms, he passes like the huge sun, yellow against the sandy hills."

"Like my Hector," she said, her eyes shining.

While talking with Incarnacion I became adept at finding synonyms for the Spanish I lacked. For instance, I certainly didn't know the Spanish for Texas wildflowers, so I said something like, "**Hay muchas flores, algunas como sombreros azules**--there are many flowers, some like blue hats--"

Incarnacion and I always understood each other, even though my Spanish was bookish. I read and wrote the language much better than I spoke it.

Pete's Spanish was a little better than mine; both of us had devoted several years to the language. Yet he and Incarnacion could never understand each other. It would take him thirty minutes to explain that there was some sugar on the kitchen floor. And after the thirty minutes she was as likely to clean the bathroom as the kitchen. I kept telling him that his bossy approach caused her to pretend she didn't understand him.

"Don't accuse me of being paternalistic," he said.

"Okay," I said.

"Have I told you of Francisca and Angel?" Incarnacion asked me one afternoon.

"No," I said, thinking that even if she had, I wanted to hear the story again.

"It was astonishing summer--el verano asombrante--in Murcia when Francisca and Angel married. And for all of the angels it was necessary to come to see their own Angel take a bride. He had hair as soft as clouds and lips the color of the pink rose of Murcia. Francisca was una triguena, like coffee, rich with cream. She had broken a dozen hearts before she yet had fifteen years."

"Was Angel tall?" I asked.

"No, he was shorter than you, I guess. I remember nothing of that. Is it possible that anyone might ever notice the height of an angel?" she asked.

"It's possible."

"I danced all of the night of the wedding. Ah, I knew that Angel and Francisca would go through life as though living a dance eternally. And it made many years that it appeared to us they would dance forever. The two became more and more a gift to the eyes."

"Did you love Angel?" I asked.

"All the world loved Angel, and not yet had I met Hector. I loved Francisca too. She also was loved by all. Any of us would have become slaves for all of the years of our lives if Angel or Francisca had asked us to serve as slaves."

"Go on," I said.

"They had three children, almost perfect, and Angel worked as a gardener in the parks of Murcia. So Francisca was always in her home, creating it as a special home. All followed like a story." Incarnacion paused for effect.

"Then one day came a huge surprise. Francisca called upon the woman, the *mujer* of the house of *vecinos* and said, 'I have killed Angel.'"

"What made her do it?" I asked.

"I suppose no one ever was to know," Incarnacion said. "Many times he had been stabbed--a small, sharp knife."

"And then what happened?" I asked.

"That is all. Hector rode into Murcia, and I was carried here. I do not know the fate of the life of Francisca."

"I have an ache in the stomach," I said. "I am going down to the *cala* and lie in the shade."

I knew that Francisca killed Angel because there was nothing else she could do. She had lost herself in him until she didn't know where she ended and he began. She had to kill him to free herself.

I lay on the beach for a long time thinking of the two lovers.

Although I had some respect for Robert Graves and wouldn't argue with him about the existence of tide in the Mediterranean, I wonder if his knowledge was correct for that particular afternoon. The water kept coming toward me in a way that surf can never do. In fact, the water seemed intent upon chasing me all the way back up the hill.

"Perhaps Francisca was crazy. Maybe she was a Lesbian," I told myself. But then perhaps I too was crazy, and I certainly was gay. I decided that wasn't a good explanation since I was not living with a woman the way Francisca had been living with a man. The more I tried to think about the story, the more confused I became.

That evening Pete said, "I think we're going to have to let Incarnacion go. She just isn't keeping the place clean."

"You could eat off the floor," I said, too exhausted by Angel and Francisca to think of any less trite comment.

"Yes, but the table is like a pig sty."

"Have you ever seen a pig sty?" I demanded.

"I don't think so."

"Well, being pig-shit Irish, I have. And in my opinion you exaggerate. In fact, you lie"

"Tom, my hearing is not impaired."

"She is the only poet on this island, and that includes your precious White God, Mr. Prick, Senor Roberto, the insufferable old son of a bitch who stepped right out of the 17th century."

"Poet? You and she are in your purple period, I guess. One more word of sentimental Spanish from you two alcoholics, and I think I'll be driven to spend all of every day on the

beach. And I certainly don't think this is the proper time to talk about the literary merits of any authors who are published by other means than through the patronage of a lover." He lowered his eyes much too condescendingly for my taste, and I was as furious with that as I was with what he had said.

While his eyes were set on the pig-sty table, I hit him on the head with a wrought-iron candlestick. He fell over and began to get blood on Incarnacion's nice, clean tiles. I hadn't knocked him unconscious, but I decided that I hadn't hit him just right for I certainly had hit him hard enough.

He got up, not saying anything, and went to the bathroom, returning after about fifteen minutes with a bandage on the left side of his head.

"Incarnacion goes. **Manana.**"

"Then, I go **manana**," I said.

Determined not to back down, we looked at each other for a long time before Pete decided he would have to say something. "Tom, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. It was a lie. I published the poems because they're good. You are all right, but you can be very hard to live with at times."

"I want to go to Paris," I said. "I don't know what you see in this Technicolor shit-town. Let's go to Paris."

"If we have trouble here, we'll have trouble in Paris. We can't climb out of our skins by going to another place," he said.

"There's nothing here for me. In Paris there is. Without Incarnacion I'll be a lunatic in three days."

"Something is wrong with her. Spanish women don't drink. If they do, they might have a sherry or maybe one cognac, but no Spanish woman drinks excessively with an Americano--unless she's a whore."

"Incarnacion a whore?" I laughed at the image this brought to my mind. "She's at least sixty, and she looks a hundred."

"She's **una bruja**," Pete said.

"All gifted women are called witches." I was sure I had read or heard this explanation.

"Incarnacion is **la Murciana**, nothing more and nothing less."

"You'll have to admit she's an alcoholic," Pete said.

"Who isn't?"

"Let's try a compromise. We'll keep her for the next week and talk carefully about our decision, but we must decide definitely ten days from tonight."

Two days later I caught the bus to Palma to spend a few days. In Palma I wandered around, hour after hour, trying to find out exactly what was going wrong with me, with me and Pete. I bought a Mallorcan gardener's hat which I wore for a few hours, enjoying the way it felt and the way it looked as I watched myself in shop windows. Then I walked down to the waterfront and threw the hat into Graves's tideless Mediterranean.

I picked up a young Mallorquin on the street behind the cathedral and took him to my room. We stripped slowly while I learned that his name was Manuel.

"What do you want from life, Manuel?" I asked. Big questions sometimes seem easier to ask in a foreign language.

"I want to go to America," he said, and I thought that the answer sounded very similar to a line from my past, the statement about my desire to be published.

While we walked toward the bed, I reached over and took his cock into my hand. Moments after I touched it, he began to come, the sticky semen dropping onto the tile floor. It was just as well for I couldn't have come had we tried for hours. I wondered what the Spanish for **premature ejaculation** was. I would have to ask Incarnacion. I laughed while Manuel and I got dressed, but I couldn't explain to him the reason for the laughter which sounded strange in my own ears.

While walking through Palma, I saw a beautiful knife with a sharply honed Spanish-steel blade. Every few hours I would return to look at the small, gold-handled weapon.

Just before I took the bus back to Deya, I bought the knife. Carrying it in my pocket, I felt

intoxication stronger than that brought on by liquor.

Pete met me at the bus, telling me that he had felt I would be on that particular one. Of course, there was only one bus a day, but there had been no definite agreement about what day I would get back. I suspected that he had met the bus each day and would have gone on doing so until I returned.

"How about our going to Paris?" he asked.

"When?"

"Whenever you want."

"Pete, I've been thinking while I was in Palma. There's something I want to tell you."

"He didn't look at me as he asked, 'What?'"

"I like some of Robert Graves's poems."

"I know that," he laughed. "You were mad at me, so you lashed out about Graves. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"I guess I am," I said.

"Is there anything else you want to tell me?" he asked.

"I don't know. I really don't even think I had anything I wanted to say when I told you I had something to tell you."

"Did you have a good time in Palma?"

I took a deep breath. "I had sex with a young Mallorquin."

Pete still wasn't looking at me. "Do you want to tell me about it?"

"Not especially. It wasn't right. Do you want all the details?"

"I don't know."

"If it had been good, better than you and I are, would you want to hear?" I asked.

"I don't know. I'm glad it was the way it was, though."

"I do still love you, Pete. But we're really getting our lives all fucked up, aren't we?"

"Maybe that's how we know we're alive," he shrugged, looking at me finally.

After Pete went to sleep that night, I walked down to the *cala* where I sat beside a boulder and masturbated. Then I threw the knife into the sea.

The next day we went to Palma and took a boat to Barcelona, the first stop on our way to Paris.

**Upon
the Death
of the Poet
Sappho**

—by Frankie Hucklenbroich

Andromeda:

Well, I can't say that I really liked her, though
I will admit that she was a fine teacher when
she kept her mind on the classwork
and not on her pupils. Her poetry is nice—
although a bit too full of stars and moonbeams—
a bit overdone for my taste. I like
practical, realistic things. I'd rather read
a little more of life and less of drama, thank you.

Most of the girls adored her, though,
and you can bet she took advantage of it.
They were always mooning after her, and vying
to bring her sweetmeats or a cup of milk,
or to see which one got to brush her hair.
It was disgusting. As for me, I found her
a little ridiculous. I mean, here was
this dark little woman—in her **forties** at the time—
and **famous**, too—chasing every pretty face
in Mytilene. Always falling in and out of love
and writing torch-songs afterward.
And constantly sending those wretched bouquets
and sticking those poems in among the flowers!
You would think a woman in her position
would know how to behave with dignity. Instead,
she had to play the role of a great lover.
Believe me, that was no raving beauty; women's looks
go quickly at that age, anyway. I'll say this much
for her: Sappho was always fair. Two years
before I graduated, I took her girl-friend
away from her. I did it partly because
I wanted the girl, and partly just to see
if I could do it. (They had been together
for quite some time, I understand.) Well,
all Sappho ever did about it was to write
that snide little poem about my manners and my
ankles. The one that's always in the anthologies.
She never tried to force me from the school; never

gave me a bad grade that I didn't deserve. Once she said, "Andromeda, what have I done, that you should be so cruel?" So I pretended I didn't know what she meant. But that was all. It's been many years since I've seen her, but I'm not surprised that she finally killed herself. Neurotic as she was.

Atthis:

You knock upon my door, and stand there
squinting at me in the sun,
and ask me to tell you what I 'thought' of Sappho?
(As though we merely speak
of last week's chariot-races or the outcome of
some pending election. Not Sappho.)

She burned.

No moment passed.

She told us

never to be so afraid of pain
that we would fail to reach for what
we wanted. She said that pain was only
a tool for learning life, and it is better
to risk paying for a chance at joy
than to find safety in foregoing it.

Many things amused her, I remember. She
was always laughing. Often, she was most amused
by herself. There was a tenderness in her for
children, and for small and helpless things.

I saw her really angry only once. The stable-boys had trapped a young badger in the field behind the school. The boys brought it into the courtyard, where they let it go. We girls were reading aloud by turns, and Sappho, distracted by the shouts and laughter from outside, asked me to see what caused the noise. From the open doorway, I saw the boys running, beating with sticks at something on the ground. Then, the badger broke through an opening and staggered toward the house. Blood streamed from its open mouth. Its small eyes bulged. I screamed, and Sappho ran to me, calling to the other girls to keep their places. When Sappho saw the badger pulling itself along the wall, and the laughing boys following after, she wrenched the stick from the hands of the nearest boy, and struck out at them, cursing, and hitting where she could. The boys scattered, and Sappho and I drove the badger into a wicker hamper and took it to our rooms. Sappho was weeping, and saying, "Poor beast! Poor beast!" The trap had broken both its forelegs. We kept him and nursed him, though we both were bitten. The legs healed crookedly. He was quite tame, by then, and used to drag himself after Sappho everywhere. Yes, I loved her. Only

my own stupidity caused us to part. I married, to please my parents and because he made me curious. I was a foolish girl! When I tried to return, Sappho willingly forgave me, but another had my place in her heart. I have missed her always. Please leave me now. We have talked enough, and this house is in mourning.

Cleis:

Being the child of someone famous is no privilege. There's always something to live up or down to, and for all the glamor and attention, it can still be bitter as gall. My mother was very good to me in her way. Certainly, I never lacked for pretty things. I always had a fine pony, and spending-money, and I met many others who were famous; generals and poets, philosophers and notorious *hetaerae*, all sat me on their laps, stuffed me with cakes and made a great deal of me. Mother gave me everything except her time. She was always so busy with the school, and then there was the writing, and—her women-friends. Sometimes, she'd take me to a banquet at some great person's fine house. But I was too little to understand all that learned talk. I'd end the evening miserable and forgotten, sleeping curled on a pillow in some corner. And then there was the long ride home. After a while, I grew to live content within myself,

and seldom saw my mother outside of the classrooms,
(for, of course, I could never dine with her, or
sleep in her rooms.) I had a few close friends
near to my own age, and my books, and then
I married young, and of my own choosing.
Over the years, mother has sometimes tried to fill
the breach between us, but there has been
so little for us to speak of to each other. I
resented her and could not help but be
cold to her, though it shames me now. I am
afraid that I can give you no real insight into her.
We seemed to be strangers to each other, friendly,
but nothing more. In fact, I had not seen her for
this three years past. I'm sorry. I wish—perhaps,
if she had come to me—I could
have helped, somehow. I don't know. To think
of her—on the rocks below that cliff—she didn't come.
Mother never needed me.
I don't know why.

Phaon:

Yes, I'm the one. I don't understand this.
Listen, I'm only a sailor. I like my boat,
and open water, and lying on my back at night
watching the stars wheel across the skies, feeling
the boat moving beneath me. I like plain living;
an extra set of nets and a decent wind—that's all

I need to go anywhere. I like my freedom. Poetry,
philosophy—what do I know about such things? I leave
all that to the people in the cities. How
to bring my boat through a storm, where to
find good fishing, how to read a course by
the stars, the way to bring my bark
through treacherous currents—**that's** my world!
This old woman, Sappho, met me on the beach.
I was mending my nets, and she asked me for
water. Spoke kindly to me. I didn't mind,
when she began to come out to the boat and spend
the day. I even taught her a bit of sailing, for
she seemed interested. Then she began to bring
presents to me—a warm cloak. (This one
I'm wearing now. See here, where she stitched
her name? I can't read, but that is what
she said it was. Her name.) Then, a pair of
sandals. A hair-band and a leather knapsack. I
took them because, after all, I'm poor. She
said she was my friend. Most of my life I've
spent alone, with just the sea. Sappho and I
roamed all about the coast of Mytilene, that summer.
She'd bring a basket of food and wine. Such **treats**,
although I don't like wine. It makes my head ache,
so I never drink it. Sometimes she'd have
a notebook with her, and if the sea was calm enough,
she'd lean it on her knees and scribble in it. She
used to say that I was probably an orphaned
prince, cast out by my evil uncle. Often, she sang.

Her voice was very low, and pretty. Then, she began touching me. She'd brush the hair back from my face, or play with the tassles on my cloak, or put her hand on mine. Once, Sappho asked if I would like to go to Athens, someday, to be educated. I laughed, and said that I was happy as I am. At first, I thought she wanted a kept boy, and I planned for the fine new boat I'd have, while I waited for her to make some move. (For, truth to tell, I don't know how to go about such things as making myself desire an old woman.) I never minded waiting, for I really liked her. Later, I knew that I had been mistaken; what Sappho really wanted was someone to care for, for the caring's sake. She used to tease me, saying that I had a face pretty enough to be a girl's, but that my body would save us both from an ordinary love-affair. I wasn't shocked; it's common enough for women to love women, as men love other men. Sappho told me that it had been years since she had a real friend; all those who called themselves her friends enjoyed her talk, her wines, her fame, her wit, but none could see Sappho herself. Another time, she smiled and said, "Dear Phaon, I'm drawn to you because you are not only beautiful to look upon, but ignorant enough to have remained able to understand realities." She used to say that sometimes people learn so much that they kill knowing. She had

grown weary of what she called 'conversing as display for intellect.' She had grown weary of women also, for she knew that no young woman can for long, or truly, desire a woman nearly sixty. Twice in three years, she'd lost a lover to their lust for youth, for firm, unwrinkled flesh. She told me, "Women can have great cruelty in love. A woman has the talent of a striking snake, when aiming at another woman." No, all this gossip touching us was never so; Sappho and I, each lonely in our way, were only friends. But that is much. (She did ask if I'd sell the boat, and come to stay with her in Mytilene, but I refused—and wish I hadn't.) For a while, she stopped visiting me, and thinking that I had perhaps hurt or angered her, I went to see her. Poor Sappho was neither hurt nor angry; she was just in love. Again. I met her little jade, dined with them both. The girl was young, of course, and pretty enough, but had a slit-eyed, thinking look I didn't like. Sappho had eyes for nothing but this black-haired chit. I left early, not caring for the way the girl flirted with me behind Sappho's back, nor how she preened beneath Sappho's attentions. I didn't see Sappho for several weeks, and when she came, she acted as one crazed. The girl had left her for a tavern-keeper; left laughing,

telling Sappho that she planned to stay
only until she accumulated enough for a proper
dowry. Sappho begged me to come with her, kept
saying that she needed someone to care for;
someone to trust. She said, "I know I cannot
bear this. I cannot." And I—was ill-tempered with her,
still annoyed at her foolishness. She went away
at last. I thought of her wrinkled face. Her
pleading look. I cursed myself bitterly, for
feeling guilty. The next day, she returned, and
started in again. "You are my friend!" she cried.
"I need you now!" I grew more impatient with her
weakness. "Phaon, you are my anchor, my very
last chance, don't you see? I cannot bear
this disgust with the world. With all the lies."
I told her that I had to run the boat
out for a few weeks. When I returned we'd
talk again. I gave her little comfort; said I knew
that with a bit of time she'd feel much better.
Then I cast off, and left her standing on the beach.
So tiny she suddenly looked! When I returned
I found she'd taken up with the black-haired chit again.
They seemed altogether happy. Sappho took me
aside and told me that the girl had changed. "She
realized how much she loves me, when she left.
We have long talks now, and quiet evenings." In
pity and disgust, I went away. Shortly thereafter,
I sailed for Leucadia, to work the fresher
waters for a while. Two months passed.

On a morning, I was stretching out my nets
atop a grassy cliff above the ocean. The day
was bright and warm, the sky was very blue and
filled with circling gulls. From nowhere, Sappho
came along the path toward me. Standing before me,
her face was very calm. "I thought to see
my friend, again," she said. Reaching out, she
quickly touched my cheek. "Phaon, I am
too old for running anymore, whether it be
from or after. It's true, isn't it? I'll not
again be any beloved's beloved, will I? Nor
can I live unloved. It is my air." And I—still
surprised to see her, and glad, and so relieved
that she seemed sensible, and after all, she
looked so solemn—like a wise old owl—said, "When
you play a children's game with children, you
must lose,"—and began laughing. That's how
it happened. I was laughing, and she looked
at me, and then—just nodded, and turned, and
stepped over the edge. There was no outcry.
When I looked down, she lay smashed upon the rocks.
I ran to the nearby village, but when
the men and I returned, the sea had already
covered the place. The tides had taken the body out.
It's a pity that the old woman is dead. She was
my friend.

No Reason

BY JEANINE STROBEL

last night, at 12 oh 5
i cried (at that time)
for no reason whatever
for if there had been one
i would have laughed, out loud
but last night
(while i cried)
i held my head in my hands
and rocked and rocked
and then (while in motion)
i pretended my hands weren't mine
because sometimes
i wish (more than anything)
they were someone else's holding my head
while i cry (for no reason)
and the hands would say
"i understand that
no reason is the best reason
in the world."

To Cry

Story

BY DAN ALLEN

One of my lovers died
of spontaneous combustion.

Such originality.
But just try to get the smell
of burnt hair burnt flesh
burnt blood out of an apartment.

There was another one
who kept singing
 Beedy widey bah do.
 My body is a freeway.
 Turnpike, turn back,
 Tell me where you're runnin.

When we tired of that tune,
there were others
 Red fox red fox
 Get out of my shoes
 Baby'll try to teach you
 Some lowdown blues.

But you can't sing forever,
and the first song was right.
Freeways are for running.

Lately, have you noticed
I've been wearing bandages?
Nothing's wrong.
I just want everyone to think
I lead an interesting life.

Proposal

BY DAN ALLEN

Don't think me sardonic,
But friendships platonic
Never come early but late.

Do you mind if I show you?
Well, first I'll just blow you,
And then we'll discuss Watergate.

Deal

BY DAN ALLEN

People can't be bought and sold any more, can
they?

Well, I have this wild plastic crown of thorns.
It's used, but that just makes the plastic look like
old ivory.

I'd like to swap it for you.

Do you belong to anybody?

Crossroads

by Robert Bentley

The old Plymouth seemed to labor under its mantle of dust. From inside came the sound of haphazard song, two people casually humming different tuneless melodies as though out of boredom.

The highway split and the car turned south after the briefest of stops. Accelerating through the gears sent up a gust of smoky protest from the tail; as the car passed and it settled, the sound of birds at work in the wheatfields returned.

The driver wore an open khaki shirt, its sleeves rolled high to corset the gristle of muscle. The left arm rested on the open window where a spot on the finish remained clean and polished. Levis were below, and boots--the dress of a farmer.

A farmer's son he was, with crevices on his hands indelibly soiled and fingernails never quite clean. It was Saturday and he had not shaved since Thursday night before the FFA meeting in town. He sponsored boys a few years his junior and thought it a good example, though normally he shaved only on Sundays.

His companion was from the same mold, but more trim, perhaps. His foot tapped on the floorboards in concert with his own voice but out of sorts with the motor's rhythm.

Clayborn was a few miles ahead, a sleepy, wide place in the road on a sleepy afternoon. It had been a long time since Clayborn. The driver adjusted himself on the worn seat, sensing it, and looked sideways to his companion, grinning. "Clayborn ahead. You want to get gas?"

The other did not look at him. He considered the road ahead. At length he shrugged. "We'll take a look."

There was a Phillips station on the near edge of town. They slowed, easing into the dirt drive. Sitting by the edge of the shed was a boy in his teens. Long, awkward, blonde, suntanned.

"Okay?" the driver asked. "No one else around."

"Okay."

The car pulled to the pump and the passenger got out, stretched high, and regarded the boy as he came around to the driver's side.

"Dollar regular," the driver said.

The passenger walked to the shed, into the toilet.

The gas took only a moment; a bill waited in the driver's fingers at the window.

"That'll be a dollar."

It was offered out the window, but when the boy reached for it, stayed in the driver's hand. His eyes were hard on the boy and for a moment he felt a certain kind of envy as the young face flushed under the tan. They regarded each other for a moment.

"Don't know if you'd be interested," the driver said casually, "but that hitchhiker I picked up gives one hell of a blow job."

The youth stared at him, expressionless.

"You interested, go on in. He'll do the same for you."

The boy flushed again and took the dollar. The driver pretended not to watch as the boy rang up the sale inside. It was so still the bell on the cash register was loud. He stepped to the doorway, looking up and down the road, thinking. The driver whistled softly, pretending to fiddle with the radio.

In a single movement the boy disappeared. The driver smiled, breathed deep the smell of ripening wheat. He put his head back and lit a cigarette, watched it disappear in hanging sworls which ventured near the window to be drawn out by the gentle movement of air.

They came out of the toilet together, and the boy became very busy with something inside the shed. The passenger strolled across the dirt and got into the car. In a moment it was gone.

"Gorman's only five miles," the passenger said when the engine had settled down to a steady thump. "You want?"

The driver thought for a moment. "Why not?" he said. He eased the car to the side of the road, and, of course, they changed places.

Scene

By ROBERT HOPKINS

1: (slow approach, casual)
Can I have one of those?

2: (noncommittal)
Sure.

1: (friendly)
Oh is that a Benson or a Hedge?

2: (almost curt; nay, deliberated)
Take your pick.

(pause)
Is it lit?

1: Well, if it's not I could suck harder and it'll fire
by spontaneous combustion. Just about
anything will,
wouldn't you think?

2: (not unkind)
Wouldn't you think.

(pause)

1: (looking away, noncommittal)
It's pretty crowded tonight.

2: (ibid)
The weather.

1: (still looking elsewhere, gentle smile)
Yeah, I guess; it does wonders.

(slight pause, looks at 2)

Affects the soul in countless ways
mysterious do you come here often? I mean, I've
never seen you before.

2: Is that a question?

1: Yes

2: No.

1: Oh.

(both look elsewhere, medium pause)

1: (changing the subject, but not)
Are you from around here?

2: (wry smile)
Does it matter?

1: Well, for small talk, yes, but for profundities
rather trite my name's John, what's yours?

2: Damon.

1: (is he making fun?)

Oh, really? That's a different name. Well, different
from John, of course. How do you spell it?

2: (slight pause, too clearly enunciated)
Phonetically.

(long pause)

2: (as 1 starts to walk away)
What're you drinking?

1: (pause, smiles, returns, too clearly
enunciated)
Creme de cacao, frappe.

2: Is it good?

1: We like it.

2: Can I try a bit?

1: Be my jest. (hands glass)

2: It is good, want to pay a sick call on a slightly
deranged bishop?

1: (medium pause, smile, drag of cigarette, too
casual)

He live near here?

2: (a "You-bet-your-booties-granny" upsweep)
Riiiiight around da corner

1: (looks at 2, level, but amused)
I'll get my coat.

The Tiger or The Lady

BY DANIEL CURZON

(Best Girl)

Priscilla Hardesty patted the chalk dust from her unmanicured fingers, wondering what chalk did to a person's lungs. Should a teacher get "Pollution" or "Hazardous Duty" pay? She walked down the corridor, passing a gaggle of students. **A giggle of students, they should be called!** She unlocked the women teachers' restroom and went in. Then she locked the door from the inside. Lesley Armedon had been raped in this very restroom the year before. Only the newcomers took chances.

Priscilla soaped her hands, rinsing them tenderly, as if they were made of Waterford crystal. It was her chief luxury at the end of the school day, treating her hands to a quiet orgy of cleansing and lingering in the warm water. Fortunately nobody else came in. Sometimes Wendy Mahonovich crept in to adjust a Tampax, but today she had gone home early, rushing away to make preparations for the week she had finally decided to spend with the "boy" she had been dating for six months. Priscilla knew that she should be rushing too, since she was supposed to pack for the Easter "vacation" that she and her husband were to spend in Detroit with her parents. She did not want to go, and the warm water on her hands lulled her, comforted her. **It must be a substitute for curling up in a foetal position, she thought to herself. Of course I'm too big for that. Thirty-year-olds aren't permitted foetal positions. Thirty-year-olds must make Big Decisions in Their Lives!**

She glanced at her reflection in the merciless glare of the restroom's overhead lighting. She didn't look thirty, thank god. More like twenty-

five, maybe twenty-three. Some of the other teachers even mistook her for a high school tutor at times. Priscilla adjusted her semi-lie in her mind. **No, that was two years ago, when I first started teaching here.** Yes, she was decidedly a woman in appearance now--full breasted, poised, perhaps her nose overloading the face just a trifle, her skin pale because she wore no make-up. **Do I look mannish?** she wondered, vaguely apprehensive. **Is it wrong to look mannish if I do? Would anyone be able to tell that I like women? A woman. That I love Carolyn, a particular woman.** She took her hands out of the water. **Should I put on some make-up, rosey up my cheeks for the boys, for Chuck? Poor Chuck, what's he gotten himself into with me! I turned him down twice; he should have taken no for an answer. But I married him, because I wanted to be "normal." Maybe because I wanted to change my name from Priscilla Turnipseed! Whatever the reason, I did marry him. It must be like having sex with a corpse.**

She dried her hands on the crimson towel. That was one of the nice things about Brogan Intermediate, one of the few. They still used hand towels, clean, handsomely colored ones every day. No paper towels yet, thank god. Priscilla flicked her fingers through her short, aimless hair, reprimanding it more than combing it. Chuck's school was worse, much worse. Razor blade fights were commonplace in study hall. An armed robbery of some students in the cafeteria.

Maybe mother was right; maybe I did "come down in the world" by becoming a grade-school teacher, marrying one. I was given every advantage by Mom and Dad and disappointed them by going into grade-school teaching. Even though she had a Master's degree--and not in Education, but in Spanish, and that at least appeased her college-educated mother--they assumed that their daughter had sunk below the class into which she had been born. **What good were all**

those private dancing lessons, drawing lessons, trips abroad, summers in Mexico, Country Day schools, Junior League gatherings that I was given, when I'm merely imparting Spanish verbs to acne-mean adolescents! Priscilla was troubled by the thought that her mother probably has wept many times on her pillow over her daughter.

Sometimes she too wondered if she had made a wise decision, or had she been infected with a sentimental liberalism--that she was going to Shape Youth, that she was going to go into a "changing" school and "educate" the underprivileged, mostly black students. Well, she had been doing it now for eight years. Am I successful? I get through my classes, I get them to sit still most of the time--that's more than Wendy Mahonovich can accomplish. And occasionally we do some exercises, read a newspaper or a book in Spanish together. At times they seem to make progress. At least I send out Progress Reports. At times it all seems so hopeless. So many of the students can't read, really can't read at all--and they're in the sixth and seventh grades! Maybe I should be teaching first or second grade--where I could catch them before they start to go wrong.

Priscilla walked back to her homeroom, noting a cleaning woman scrubbing some crayon obscenities off a wall. Nothing new. Sometimes they were lipstick obscenities, that was the only difference. She unlocked her homeroom--what a nuisance it was having to lock every room because of the thieves everywhere in the school. She put on her new spring jacket. It was pink and made her look like a "drill sergeant in drag." Or at least that's what Chuck had told her when he had first seen the epaulets on the shoulders. Was he correct? Is the coat mannish? Isn't pink for girls, though? Do my students think I look odd in it? Do they snicker about me behind my back, calling me nasty names. Will somebody write MISS LESBO in crayon on my homeroom wall? I know they call me "Vanilla Priscilla," but that's affectionate, I think, about as affectionate as

seventh-graders get. I'm their token white! It's not vicious. Surely little Donny McCullough doesn't call me Miss Lesbo behind my back! The thought hurt her. Not that sweet little kid too! Will he get as bratty and sassy as the rest, maybe next year in eighth grade? She touched the epaulets, trying to decide if she should have them removed by a tailor.

She noticed the word "barbarian" written in chalk on the blackboard. It was her own writing, but it struck her strangely. She had actually had a good class that day. She had read them "The Lady or the Tiger," in English, and they had "discussed" it afterwards. She didn't think it was a very good story, because of the unresolved ending, but it might stimulate some of them to read more. While she had been reading, Trina Williams had asked her what a barbarian was, and she had stopped to explain. There had been only one incident during the whole day--surely that was progress. Only when Turk Teal had thrown his drawing compass at Roman Gotto. Fortunately it hadn't stuck in Roman, and she had finished the story and the discussion. Most of them even seemed to enjoy the story very much. Surely that was progress, wasn't it? They might even read a story on their own.

Priscilla checked the windows to make sure they were locked; she picked up her cassette, almost forgetting it. Not again! she vowed to herself. Already she had lost a typewriter and two purses to pimply thieves. They wouldn't get her cassette as well! It's not safe to leave anything over-night, let alone for a whole week of vacation. Have I really come down in life or am I doing worthwhile work, as one of my supervising teachers assured me nine years ago?

"Barbarian." She looked at the word again. Yes, Turk Teal was a barbarian, throwing a needle-sharp compass at somebody else! An aggressive, stupid boy who had been put in Spanish I because no other teacher wanted him in his or her class. "Exterminate the brutes!" Bill Schylard was always saying in the faculty lounge, between sips of coffee. "Exterminate the brutes!

Close this educational shithouse down and we'll all be happy!" Priscilla wondered if she was getting cynical too. After eight years, and three schools, she knew that she was not the blue-eyed, gung-ho liberal that she'd been in college, when she had delighted in arguing in her letters or in person with her parents, with her aunts, even Grandmother Laine, now dead, because they were so "selfish" and "conservative," terms she flung like challenges-to-duels in their faces. **Should I make the break now, before I get so cynical that I don't even try anymore? Should I leave Chuck, take Kelly and go live with Carolyn, the way she wants me to? Should I tell my parents that I love a woman? Or would that be a new version of my old teenage years' conflict? Is life really like this? Why am I living a soap opera?**

Wouldn't it be wonderful not to have to come back to this classroom ever again? I could go live with Carolyn, actually see more of Kelly than I do now. After nursery school she could come to Carolyn's store, the three of us. In San Francisco too. Leave dreary Akron for San Francisco and Carolyn! With Kelly. Leave the barbarian students to fend for themselves. There are hundreds of applicants and few jobs for teachers now. Let some other dewy-eyed hopeful take my place here and change the little beasts into human beings.

Priscilla's eye fell on the book from which she had read to the seventh graders. "The Lady or the Tiger." In some ways her own situation resembled that of the man of the tale. The difference was that if she got the lady (Carolyn), then she might very well get the tiger too, because Chuck would not let her go that easily. Then, too, her parents would want to know why she had left Chuck. The three of them would leap on her with all fangs in full working order. **They never liked Chuck, but they'd rush to his defense if they knew I was leaving him for a woman. A woman! I can see my father's fearful symmetry right now when--if--I tell him. Shall I choose the lady or the tigers? Or no change? Keep the status quo from rocking?** Priscilla locked her classroom door, not knowing where she would be in a week's time.

(Mom)

Mrs. Turnipseed was adjusting Priscilla's graduation picture on the dresser of the rear bedroom, Priscilla's old bedroom before she had married Chuck, the room that Kelly would have during their visit. Mrs. Turnipseed removed a fleck of dust, seeing that Abbie, the black maid, had not done a good job of dusting, even though she had told her several times to make the house immaculate. But then Abbie was rather slow-witted. Mrs. Turnipseed felt guilty because she knew that sounded prejudiced, but it was true. Abbie had been with them for only a month, and already it was obvious that she wasn't going to work out. Mrs. Turnipseed examined the graduation photograph again. Priscilla was not a healthy-looking girl, not in this picture, and most likely not now either, eight years later. Her face was too thin, pugnacious, not soft, with pallid lips that had always been chapped when she'd been growing up. She had always been a poor eater, that explained a great deal. Kevin had always been robust and saucy and naughty, but a good eater. Now he was safely married, with Millie pregnant. Kevin and Millie seemed so contented. **But something is wrong with Priscilla and Chuck, I feel it in my bones.**

Of course, Mrs. Turnipseed suddenly realized, as if someone had just told her a fact in an almanac, she had always loved Priscilla more than Kevin, loved her more because she had needed more love, more attention. There had been something high-strung and sensitive, at times a little sullen, in her daughter that had challenged her. **But she finally got married. She dated so seldom all through high school. But that Charm School I made her attend did help her, no matter what she said! It improved her personal hygiene and gave her a better posture. She even**

learned to smile better. And those horseback riding dates with the sons of my friends at the country club helped her too, even if they never amounted to much. She was so stubborn! But at last she got married, thank heavens!

Mrs. Turnipseed had not much cared for Chuck when she had first met him, when he began dating Priscilla during their senior year of college; they had driven all the way up from Ohio to visit her and Dad. She had tried very hard to like him, but she thought he was beneath Priscilla. For one thing, his parents lived in a tacky subdivision, the poor things, and Chuck had gotten a federal loan or a hardship scholarship or something like that! And he was not attractive either--balding, with over-exposed gums and a gait that made him sway from side to side when he walked. No doubt he was intelligent, a fine student, even on the Dean's List, but one would've thought that his family could have afforded to pay his way!

She put her remembered dislike of Chuck into another part of her mind, and smiled. They had been married for six years now, and had Kelly, a little girl of their own. And finally they were coming for another visit, after over a year. They had made so many excuses about not visiting earlier that Mrs. Turnipseed had begun to believe they were avoiding her and Dad. Well, they'd be there that evening, if there were no hitches. no traffic delays--there were so many accidents over an Easter vacation! It would be like old times. Mrs. Turnipseed did not focus very precisely on when those old times had been.

She acknowledged that there was a shadow over the visit, since Priscilla had told her over the telephone that Chuck and she were having marital difficulties. And those strange, murky letters Priscilla had sent! Mrs. Turnipseed guessed that the two of them wanted to discuss the problem with her and Dad to see how they had handled their troubles through the years, although Priscilla had not mentioned that. What could it be? Was Chuck not satisfying her in bed? Maybe that was it. That was very important, according to all the women's magazines these days. Secretly Mrs. Turnipseed felt that all the discussion about sex

was frivolous. She and Dad made love every now and again; it was nice most of the time, but neither one seemed to miss it if they went for several months without it. At least Dad never complained. **Maybe Chuck is seeing other women!** That would be worse of course, but perhaps she could persuade Priscilla to learn to live with that. After all, she had little Kelly, only four, and that should be enough to occupy any woman. Why Priscilla insisted on risking her relationship with her husband at the age of thirty, when she should be most content, was beyond her. But then her daughter had always been determined to have her own way.

Mrs. Turnipseed shook her head and replaced the photograph of her daughter on the dresser. **I guess she's just brighter than I was at her age and gets restless.** Mrs. Turnipseed had once seen her own IQ score, when she had been in college at a girls' school, because she had asked to see it. She had been disconcerted because it was an even 100. An absolutely average score! She had thought it might be closer to 130, and had been taken aback. For a time she had worked diligently at correcting what she saw as a limitation: reading Stendhal and Proust, even though she thought them boring and over-elaborate, and going to special lectures by guest speakers at the country club. Even after she had married Dad, she had tried to improve herself. Then somewhere in her thirties she had more or less given up and became reconciled to what she was. At times she felt spiteful when she read about twelve-year-old boys with 185 IQ's playing chess with computers. But then she would stop, calm herself, feel somewhat guilty, and remind herself that if twelve-year-old boys wanted to play games that was just fine; that was their business. Just as her business was raising a healthy son and daughter, Kevin and Priscilla, seeing that Dad liked his home and came home from his advertising office every night because he felt welcome and comfortable there. Besides, everybody nowadays said that IQ scores weren't accurate anyhow!

Mrs. Turnipseed stopped short at the bedroom

doorway. **Can Priscilla be planning to leave Chuck?** Her heart felt menaced for an instant. **Has Chuck found a new woman he wants to marry?** Oh, she hoped not! Six years of marriage down the drain. And a disgrace! Was Priscilla going to try to support herself and Kelly on one teacher's salary? Was that the plan? Was she coming back home to tell her and Dad in person? **Have Chuck and Priscilla talked it all over and decided everything already and are coming here to spring the decision, quite formulated, on us?** Oh, she hoped not!

(Dad)

"I'm sure everything will straighten itself out, Nora," Mr. Turnipseed was reassuring his wife over the telephone. "Priscilla's got a firm head on her shoulders. She and Chuck will work it all out."

"I'm sorry to bother you at work, but I've been bothered all day by this." Mrs. Turnipseed sounded faraway, maybe drunk. And Dad was nagged once again by the thought that his wife might be a secret drinker. **No, not that. I've never found any bottles, and mine are as full as ever.** Nora had always been sort of a vague woman. In her youth that quality had made him love her. She'd leave a pie crust too long in the oven or sharpen a pencil trying to get a perfect point until she had sharpened the pencil to a stub. A cute, giddy girl with a pretty voice. Yes, even now over the telephone she sounded like an attractive, younger woman, even if her looks had settled into domestic carelessness some years ago. Dad still loved her, though, loved her very much. He just didn't want to sleep with her anymore. Couldn't you love somebody and not want to sleep with them anymore? And Nora didn't seem to notice his extramarital affairs. She never asked him why Miss Reynolds called him at home from time to time. She took it that the calls were connected with his business. He and Nora had managed this

long. What was the good of ending their marriage this late, especially since Nora didn't mind their sleeping together only a few times a year.

The idea pinched him. **Is it possible she doesn't find me attractive any longer?** He picked up a brass letter opener from his desk and considered his reflection. Few wrinkles. Just on the neck a bit. The moustache was mostly white, that was true. And the sideburns were frosted. But then that's what so many of the girls said they liked about him. He looked distinguished. "Bony, but very distinguished," to quote Miss Reynolds. Certainly he was as vigorous now as he had been when he had founded the advertising company, thirty-two years ago. **We did four and a half million dollars' worth of business last year. And Business Week is readying that feature article on me. I'd call that pretty damn distinguished!**

He looked up at the large bay window of his office. His very own building, three storeys high and employing forty-eight people full time, forty-nine if you counted the janitor. He had two hundred and seventy thousand dollars in stocks and mutual funds, the house in Bloomfield Hills, two cars, another hundred thousand in a numbered Swiss bank account that Nora knew nothing about, and with the improvements in the building that he'd made in the previous year, the property must be worth almost double the previous estimate of \$352,000. Also a loving wife, a clean-cut married son with his own loan firm getting started, a wife with a baby in the oven, a schoolteacher daughter. That's more than most men get in life. He had his health still at fifty-eight, and the new American Motors account would push them up into the really first-rank advertising companies!

The only real fly in the ointment was Priscilla. Her two telephone calls from Akron and now this Easter visit--and the three suspicious letters about "turmoil inside"--all this certainly indicated that something was wrong. Dad recalled his daughter as a bride, all flustered and shiny-nosed. **No doubt it's that schnook Chuck's**

fault! Balding little fellow, more than an inch shorter than Priscilla, and two years younger too. He's probably cutting out on her, but doesn't have the savvy to know how to hide what he's doing. A man owes that to his wife. But what can she expect from a schoolteacher. All he knows is what longitude Afghanistan's at! Social Studies! He couldn't function in the business world! Supposedly he's "educated," and yet he doesn't know enough to cover his tracks and keep his marriage together. And now they're coming to stay in the big house for almost a week and will disrupt my schedule and probably wind up getting a divorce and asking me for legal assistance on top of everything!

These young people nowadays can't keep their emotions under control. If I didn't manage my company better'n they do their lives, I'd have been broke years ago. They've also got Kelly to think about. God knows, I didn't have a single affair until after Priscilla and Chuck were engaged! And I had plenty of chances before that! I've earned something, and besides I've got a sense of responsibility. The least those two could do would be to maintain the decencies.

Mr. Turnipseed rose from his swivel chair and checked his appointments calendar. Lowell Lurgoville would be there in fifteen minutes. That left time to do some isometrics and maybe use the exercise roller. He looked at the wheel with the handle through it, which was resting on a shelf behind his desk. He hadn't used it for three months. He felt his chest. Yes, the flesh was getting flabby there again. Time to exercise, that was for sure. He took the roller from the cluttered shelf and got down on his hands and knees and began to stretch so that his stomach and chest muscles pulled. The thick pile of the cream-colored Oriental rug protected his knees as he rolled the exercise wheel back and forth, beginning to breathe hard.

You would think that those sessions with the shrink would have ironed out Priscilla's problems. God knows she spent enough money

doing it. And I didn't begrudge her using the stocks I gave them as a wedding present to pay for the shrink! Though it was a waste of time and money! Why doesn't she pull herself together on her own? A grown-up person crying on somebody else's couch, what a way to handle things! Now, I know there're times when a person can't manage on their own, and so they have to have help, like a doctor or dentist. But anybody who wants to solve his own problems can do it if he sets his mind to it! I thought we raised Priscilla to be more self-reliant. God knows, she argued with me often enough when she was growing up. And then she goes and gets herself into a marriage with some dumb "school-teacher" who can't even keep the hair on his head at age twenty-eight! And then she goes and gets herself some shrink to hold her hand for a year and a half and tell her she's got penis envy or something stupid like that! And now she's coming home to us to help bail her out and save the marriage.

Mr. Turnipseed leaned way out with the exercise wheel, feeling his stomach and chest muscles grow taut and satisfying. Well, of course I'll straighten them out, because she's still my baby, still my best girl.

(Chuck)

Once they were inside the apartment, Chuck put the mail--one letter only--on the table in the den, merely an alcove off the living room. Then he put a bandaid on Kelly's cut finger, kissing her on the top of the head when he was finished. She had said that she'd cut herself on the slide at nursery school, and he wondered why she hadn't told anybody there, not even her teacher, whatever her name was. Maybe they should take Kelly out of that school and put her in one closer to his or Priscilla's. Was Kelly growing up to be a shy, frightened girl? Would she suffer a cut finger all afternoon and not tell anybody until she got home? If Priscilla were any kind of a mother, she would have put bandaids in Kelly's school

box--just in case!

"You want to help Daddy pack?" he asked Kelly.

"Okay!" she exclaimed, and grinned from sweet little ear to sweet little ear, then ran into the bedroom ahead of her father.

Chuck took both his and Priscilla's suitcases out of the closet and opened them on the king-size bed. They wouldn't need many changes of clothes, though Detroit would be as cool as Akron. All they'd really need would be some good clothes to wear to chapel on Easter Sunday. **Her parents will insist that we accompany them to services. Priscilla hasn't let them direct her life in most ways, but won't tell them she doesn't go to church anymore. It's about time she severed the umbilical cord all the way! All her deceit! But, no, she won't! She still clings to her folks like they were sages. Sometimes she makes me think she's no older than Kelly!**

He looked at his daughter pulling her mother's high heels out of the plastic rack on the inside of the closet door. "No, honey, Mommy won't be needing those this trip," he said affectionately, and the child reluctantly put them back into the rack. "Why don't you get some of Daddy's underwear out of the dresser, okay?"

"Okay!"

"When Kelly reached in and lifted out a couple of handfuls of his jockey shorts, he had a sudden burst of apprehension. Should he be encouraging her to touch his underwear? Was it Freudian or something? Was he warping her somehow by doing that? Maybe she's grow up with a fetish or something for men's underwear. Chuck knew he was being outlandish and yet the thought wouldn't disappear. Would Kelly grow up like her mother--not satisfied with a man's love, wanting forbidden things, wanting to make love to women!

"Put those down!" he ordered his daughter, more angrily than he realized, and Kelly dropped them on the floor and looked at him as if she would cry. Quickly he went over and picked up the underwear and gave his daughter a hug, then lifted her high over his head and swung her

around, until she giggled with delight. No, Priscilla won't make Kelly into a lesbian too! **Over my dead body! She has a right to grow up normal. How do we know if we're raising her right? How does any parent ever know? With discomfort, he recalled the night a couple of months before when he had caught Kelly and Mandi, the six-year-old who lived in the next apartment, playing with each other in the bathtub. He had spanked Kelly hard and sent Mandi home at once. Had he done the right thing? Well, nobody could say that he'd stood by and let his daughter descend into perversion because he'd not tried to stop her! She wouldn't be able to come to him years afterward and call him nasty names because he hadn't tried to help her!**

"Why don't you go play in the living room, honey. We'll pack you later," he said as he set her down.

"Can't I help pack you?" she asked, looking up at him, as small as an elf, but very serious. An elf who was seldom impish.

He felt his insides dissolve, and some spiced tears tickled at the back of his eyes. **What're Priscilla and I doing to our child?** She wasn't a pretty child, not really; there were little bags under her eyes, shadows or something, little bags under eyes at age four. And her hair was drab, brown as peanut butter. And the silver beret in her hair seemed only to make her look plainer. Poor, serious, shy little Kelly! She would grow up to be a nobody. Somehow their genes hadn't combined well the first time. He and Priscilla had produced an ordinary, neither-ugly-nor-beautiful child. Maybe they should try again, maybe a boy this time.

When he looked up, Kelly was taking some of Priscilla's half-slips out of the bottom drawer of the dresser. She brought them over to him and held them toward the suitcase. "That's right, Kelly. Mommy'll need some of those." As Chuck took the half-slips from his daughter, one of them came unfolded, and he held it in front of the child. It was much too long and fell over her shoes, but he placed her hands on the elastic waistband and

made her hold it against herself. "See how pretty you are!" he complimented, and the little girl twirled around twice, giggling, almost falling. "Oh, you're so pretty!" he said, smiling at her.

Do lesbians ever molest little girls? Chuck thought of Carolyn, as if someone had stabbed him in the neck with an icicle. He had never heard of that, but wasn't it a possibility? If Priscilla ran off to live with Carolyn, would she dare to do things to Kelly? The icicle in the back of his neck turned into dry ice and began to torment him. **They want to take my daughter away from me, and on top of it Carolyn wants to put her filthy, queer hands on her and corrupt her! It's not enough that she wants to steal my wife; she wants my daughter too!**

Chuck slammed a bottle of aftershave lotion into his suitcase, almost breaking it. "Go get Mommy's green dress with the fluffy collar," he told Kelly, wanting to get her away so she couldn't see his face, which he knew was distorted.

The little girl went over to the clothes closet and began to search for the green dress. Chuck grabbed some other toiletries from the nightstand and laid them more gently in the bottom of his suitcase. He was thinking of the pornographic magazine that he had taken away from an eighth-grade boy a week before. It had been a booklet of garish pictures of two women using dildos on each other. The pork-like flesh of the women in the photographs had disgusted him--their writhed mouths, hairy slits, the soles of their feet dirty! Disgusted and nauseated him! **And that's what Priscilla wants to do with Carolyn. Has already done with her several times, ever since they met last summer.** Chuck rubbed at the rear of his neck, knowing that he wasn't being fair. Somebody could say the same thing about men and women making love. Pornographic pictures of gaping gashes and red dicks said no more about affection and love than those rotten pictures of lesbians said about their feelings for each other. **But I don't care if I'm being fair or not! I don't CARE! Carolyn wants to**

take my wife away from me, and Priscilla is flirting with the notion. I know she is! She won't come right out with it, but she's tempted. I know she is!

He went into the room they called the den and glared at the envelope which he had taken out of the mail slot downstairs. It was a letter from San Francisco; he had seen the postmark. He knew it was from Carolyn even if there was no name, no return address on it. **How decent of them!** He had asked Priscilla not to talk about Carolyn with him, and she had complied. She never mentioned her anymore, but the letters kept coming, at least one a week. Now they were without a return address, but they were still like gobs of spit in his face!

Chuck went over and picked up the envelope, a bluish-grey one, thick paper. **From Carolyn's office supply store no doubt. I'll bet she's as efficient as a man! Even though I've never seen the truck-driving bitch, I bet she's burly and butch to beat all hell! And she wants to take my wife in her heavy arms and keep her in her bed, upset out lives! Priscilla and I get along so well, or were getting along so well until she met this dyke. She's in Akron for a lousy three weeks and now she's stealing my wife from me! I'll just bet she's something else! Big, thick legs and her hair in a brush cut, running her own business, I'll just bet she's something else! I'd like to see her take my wife away from me! I'd just like to see her!** He picked up the envelope, which was heavy. **Heavy with messages! What's happened to the world! Women like this used to hide; they were ashamed of themselves. All this gay liberation's doing it, and I'm supposed to be happy for the freaks! I'm supposed to be "understanding," "tolerant," stepping aside so that they can waltz off together in the sunset!** Chuck traced a finger over the postmark on the envelope. "I'd like to throw acid in your face; that's what I'd like to do to you! Throw acid in your face!" he snarled out loud. Then he ripped the letter into a hundred pieces and threw the scraps into the Insinkerator in the kitchen, where Priscilla would not be able to find them.

(Together)

The preliminaries of the visit were over. Priscilla and Chuck and her parents had kissed, hugged, talked about road conditions on the journey. Mrs. Turnipseed had made one of her major meals, a special *quiche lorraine*, taking all day to do it. They had even gone to chapel on Easter Sunday together, Mom wearing her robin's-egg-blue spring suit despite the 12 degree temperature. Now it was late on the third day of the visit; Kelly was asleep in her room, and the four were having after-dinner liqueurs and drinks on the back porch that Dad had converted. It was an insulated, cozy room with a fireplace.

Chuck and Mrs. Turnipseed were conversing feebly, about an Art Show that the Association of Bloomfield Hills Mothers was holding on Saturday. "But surely you can stay for that, can't you?" Mrs. Turnipseed was saying. "You two don't have to get back to Akron before Sunday, do you?"

Priscilla looked at her mother's slackened skin. She had aged; for the first time that she could remember her mother looked like an old woman, and the high color of powder and rouge did not hide the damage. At the same time there was loneliness in the eyes, caring eyes, but lonely ones. With Kevin gone now too, there really wasn't enough to keep her mother occupied. The days must be interminable.

As for Chuck, he looked stiff and ill-at-ease sitting sideways, trying to carry on a conversation with her mother. For some reason he always felt uncomfortable with her parents. There was something in their wealth that intimidated him, although he was better educated than either. There he sat, looking as if he had diarrhea and couldn't wait to leave the room.

Her father came over with a Danish wooden puzzle, which came with a set of black pegs.

"How about a game!" he said heartily, holding the puzzle out toward them. All three looked at him, not answering. "No?" he said, mildly hurt. "Well, what then?"

"Priscilla could play the piano for us," Mrs. Turnipseed said.

"Not just now." This was the part of the visit that Priscilla always dreaded, the sag that came mid-way. She had known it would come and still hadn't been able to head it off.

"Well, we could watch some TV," her father offered.

Her idea registered in Priscilla's mind quite softly. It was time. At last the elements fell into place. She knew what she was going to do. It was time.

"I have something to tell you all," she began, quite brave, until the words were out in the air. Then her throat panicked. She wanted to retrieve the words that might still be floating invisible before her. But the other three were turned to her already, waiting.

"Yes, dear?" her mother finally prompted. "What is it?"

Priscilla lowered her head. "I've been trying to come to a decision in my life--all our lives actually--for some time now. Since last summer as a matter of fact."

Chuck's nose seemed to go up on one side. He knew what his wife was going to say. He took an overlarge sip of his Drambuie, restless.

"Let me make something clear from the outset, all right?" Her parents nodded, but Chuck looked away from her. "I'm not telling you this because I want to be talked out of it, is that clear?" She coughed uncomfortably, nervous despite her conviction. "It's not that I'm asking your advice or anything like that. But I think I should tell you while we're all together." Her voice dipped at the end of the sentence, but she did not drop her eyes.

"Are you pregnant?" her father asked, breaking into a lavish grin.

Her mother knew that Priscilla was too upset to be making that kind of an announcement. "Is it something you'd like to discuss with me privately, dear?"

Chuck interrupted Priscilla before she could reply. "Are you sure it isn't something you'd like to discuss with me privately, Wifey Dear?" He got up and poured himself some more Drambuie.

Priscilla sat on the front of the cushion on the rocker she was in. The chair pitched her forward awkwardly, as the springs gave, but she refused to be rattled. It was time she changed her life. They were all civilized people. Yes, it was time that she told them.

"I think... I think that I'm going to go live in San Francisco," she said. The words were out, without all that much strain after all.

"San Francisco?" her father responded. "What you two going there for?"

"She doesn't mean us two!" Chuck gritted, showing his gums. "Do you, Wifey Dear?"

"Let's not be acrimonious about this," Priscilla said. "I'm not trying to hurt you, Chuck."

"Well, you're doing a good job of it nevertheless," he threw back at her.

Mrs. Turnipseed looked at the quarreling couple, flushing in embarrassment. They seemed as if they were going to have a fight right in her house. "What's on TV, Dad?" she said to change the subject. She and Dad hadn't had harsh words with each other for years; she couldn't remember the last time.

Priscilla made the rocker squeak again. "I think it best that Chuck and I separate for a while... Kelly can be enrolled out there... of... of course." Did she have the courage to go on with the rest of the plan?

"Are you getting a divorce?" her mother asked, touching her face.

"Are you getting married again?" her father added immediately.

Chuck crossed his legs several times, unable to sit still. "No, she's not getting married again. Are you, Wifey Dear? They don't have that kind of marriage yet-not legal ones anyway. Or do they?" He stood up. "Have you and Carolyn decided which one is going to wear the gown, or will you both be in tuxedos?"

Her father and mother looked uncomprehendingly toward Priscilla, then at Chuck again, but he had grown silent.

"I don't understand," her mother pleaded, after a moment.

"What is all this?" her father said.

"Who's this Carolyn?" her mother said, somewhat more insistent.

"Your daughter's going to live with a woman," Chuck explained. "She's going to San Francisco to live with another woman."

When her parents stared at her, Priscilla responded without hesitating. "It's quite true. As I said, I'm not asking for your approval. I'm simply clarifying... so everything will be open and above board."

"You've raised a lesbian," Chuck tossed in, tipping his liqueur glass over as he set it down on the coffee table.

"You're a what?" her father said, fumbling to put the Danish puzzle on the nearest shelf.

"Chuck!" Priscilla reprimanded. How could he be so cruel!

"I said, 'You're a what?'" her father repeated, confronting Priscilla.

"What's in a name?" she said in an attempt at lightness, but the other three did not laugh.

"You're daughter's a lesbian!" Chuck aimed the words at both parents.

"Oh!" Mrs. Turnipseed said, as if the wind had been kicked out of her.

Her father sank to the couch beside his wife and the two looked at Priscilla as if they had never seen her before. "Oh, my goddamn God!" her father cursed, unbelievably. "Oh, my God no!"

Her mother was patting one of her temples, trying not to faint. "Priscilla, how could you! Such a disgrace! This is such a disgrace!"

Chuck's eyes filled with revenge. Here was an opportunity to pay her parents back for all the insults about his origin, his job, his salary, six years of discomfort and insults because he was so much lower than they. "You evidently screwed up somewhere, didn't you? You raised a dyke of your very own! Well, congratulations!" He gloated, miserable and pleased with himself at the same time.

"You're not going to live with any goddamn woman!" her father shouted, sticking his arm toward his daughter.

Priscilla succeeded in directing her voice; the tone was urbane, matter-of-fact. "I told you I wasn't asking for your approval. Or your consent."

"Oh, no, no!" her mother started to wail. "Oh, please not this!"

"I thought there was something very wrong with your letters!" her father began scolding. "But I thought it was at least something decent!"

"Oh, this is so terrible!" Her mother began to cry.

"It must've been those girls' camps you sent Priscilla to!" Chuck smirked.

Priscilla got up out of the rocker and folded her arms. "I want you all to stop this at once!" She was authoritative and yet did not speak loudly.

But the others paid no heed. Her mother was wiping tears through her powder, making the mascara on her eyelids dribble. Her father was shaking his head back and forth, back and forth in the same movement. Near the fireplace Chuck was pretending to warm a new glass of Drambuie by holding it toward the flames.

"I'm not going to put up with this," Priscilla said more loudly, losing all her qualms. "I won't! I won't stand here and quake before you, I swear it! You're not going to make me feel ashamed of my feelings. And I'm not going to indulge in a cannibalistic feast telling you all what shits you are!"

"Oh, but we've ruined you, we've ruined your life!" her mother wailed, clutching at her husband's hand.

"None of this is right! None of this is right!" her father yelled.

"Don't you call me names! I won't stand for it!" They all looked at Priscilla with amazement. "How dare you weep over me! How dare you tell me my life is 'ruined,' that I'm not 'moral,' I'm not 'decent'! I'm every bit as decent or moral as any of you--and I won't stand for your ignorant nonsense!"

Chuck offered her a mock toast, his face hot from the fireplace. "Here's to the happy couple! Have a happy homo honeymoon!"

"Oh, we've ruined your life," her mother cried again.

This time Priscilla attacked. "The hell you've ruined my life! What are you so ashamed of? I'm not a failure. For God's sake stop treating me like one! Look at me--personally! Stop treating me like some berzerk adolescent who's murdered somebody with a hand grenade! My life is NOT ruined--I've got a Master's degree, I've taught for eight years, I have a fine child. I'm a sane, normal person, and now I'm going to go live with Carolyn in California. And not one of you is going to weep over my 'ruin' or forbid me to come back and visit you or make 'dyke' jokes to my face! Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm not ashamed of myself, and I won't let you be stupid and ashamed either! You're not going to disown me--and that's that! You did not fail me in bringing me up. What did you want anyway? A pie-maker? A pie-maker? Is that what you wanted me to become? A pie-maker!" Priscilla trembled a bit at her own vehemence.

Chuck took two steps toward her, then halted.

"And what if Kelly becomes a dyke too?" His eyes were savage.

For a moment she could not answer, her ideas jumbled. Finally she said, "Let's let Kelly decide her own life."

"That's just the point, Wifey Dear! The child doesn't decide. She's made! Her parents make

her the way she is!

"You've oversimplifying the matter. I don't want Kelly to suffer the pain I have, but there's nothing WRONG with being what I am, can't you comprehend that simple fact?"

"You'd rob her of her right to be normal!"

"The chances are that she'll be heterosexual-- 'normal.' don't you ever read anything on the subject?"

"I read enough to know that Kelly's life is in jeopardy!"

"That's ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths percent pure shit, Chuck! The world has all the pie-makers it can hold! And if Kelly isn't one of them, then I say, 'Hurray for Kelly!'"

Chuck spat the words at her. "To your warped mind there may be nothing wrong with what you are. But to the rest of the world you're a mighty queer lady!"

"That's enough, Chuck," she said very softly.

"You've lost. I'm sorry I've hurt you so deeply. I should've left long ago. Long, long ago. When it comes right down to it, I don't care anymore what other people think of me. I've been held back too long. That's what almost made me ruin my life!"

"You think I'm going to let you get away with this? Huh? You think I'm going to let Kelly go just like that?" He snapped his fingers.

"We'll work out some arrangement. She can visit you."

"How peachy!"

"Shall we ask her to choose between us? That ought to appeal to your Old Testament sense of right? Maybe we could cut her into two pieces!"

"So you think you'll get the whole shebang, is that it? The Woman You Love, Happiness, My Child--even getting to live in San Francisco, while I stay here and teach vicious brats in smelly Akron, Ohio! How peachy for you!"

Priscilla felt a tinge of remorse, but she had made up her mind. "I'm sorry it's not perfect for everybody. But I'm not in charge of the details. I've only got control of my end of the soap opera; that's all I've got. I'll finish out the school year. But I'm not going to give up Carolyn. I know that

much. You can marry again, Chuck. Marry somebody else, somebody who" She did not complete the idea, remembering that her parents were listening.

They looked dumbfounded, two old folks sitting on the sofa side by side, with the cushions lopsided. They had once been vigorous, in control of her life, her masters, and now they... they looked so old.

"Excuse me for bragging, Mom and Dad, but you did a good job in raising me--not perfect. But you have nothing to reproach yourselves for. And don't let anybody tell you otherwise! Stop listening to misinformed, backward people who don't know anything about the subject. Not anything!"

Priscilla found that she didn't even want a drink after the showdown. There was only a tiny bit of perspiration on her brow. "Now let's watch television. We're civilized human beings, aren't we?" The others didn't move. "Well, let's watch television anyway!"

She flicked on the set and a trivial talk program brightened the screen. "Exactly what we need!" she said, sitting down on the floor. She made herself laugh at the worthless joke the TV host had just told. "Would you like another liqueur?" she asked solicitously, reaching for the bottle on the coffee table. "No?" She put the bottle down and stared hard at the television set. "I'm not leaving the room or the house," she added.

To her relief, after a minute, Chuck sat down in the rocker and they all began to watch television. Her mother had stopped weeping.

I opened both doors, and I've got the lady after all, Priscilla smiled to herself. And the tigers didn't devour me. And they won't! She poured herself a Drambuie and sat back to relax. Or almost.



Gay Pride March, San Francisco, June, 1974

Gay Pride March, San Francisco, June, 1974



POPULAR LITERATURE--WHERE IT'S BEEN,

By Tom McNamara

WHERE IT'S GOING

The changes in consciousness that have resulted from the advances made by The Gay Liberation Movement have made it possible for even the establishment publishers to test their toes in the recently discovered (by them) "gay market." As of this writing, none of the mainline publishing houses has dived in over its head and tried to swim in these streams. Caution is the watchword, even with the paperback houses, which haven't much to risk. But a "market" has been discovered, which few, if any, of the establishment houses really seem to understand yet. As an observer of the popular literature situation, I've kept an eye out for obvious attempts to exploit the gay audiences and its interested bystanders, and I must say there has been less of this than you would expect, probably because gay readers are a rather sophisticated lot, and the tastemakers in the gay community are old enough and wise enough to head off any such "rip off" attempts before they get too far underway. Any book which is going to succeed with gay readers has to run the gantlet of very perceptive critics writing for an informed readership in gay periodicals these days. Gay people are, finally, organized enough not to be easily put upon, as the protests against the "Marcus Welby" television show. "The Outrage" showed. So far, no book has yet incensed enough people in the community to bring about boycott action, although, in my estimation, Dotson Rader's **Blood Dues**, the most homophobic book imaginable, would have qualified for direct action, especially if it had become more of a seller. Rader's anti-homosexual psychosis as expressed in **Blood Dues**, although honestly

presented, it seems, to the best of his ability, was something that should have been taken to a therapist rather than sent to the printer.

Surprisingly, the out-and-out bestseller among the gay books this year is a book by a woman, Patricia Warren. **The Front Runner** has achieved "best seller" status in many localities among all new books, not just books on a gay theme. Most of the reviews it received were very favorable, stressing the propaganda value of **The Front Runner**, with its "non-swishy", muscular, macho track stars and strong, masculine coach father-figure. It's just the type of book to talk up to straight friends and, as a novel, it is more than adequate, although it repeats the standard cliché of straight writers writing about gays in the almost ritual murder of the main character, Billy Sive. The truly surprising aspect of **The Front Runner** is how a female author was able to penetrate past the veils of the male homosexual mystique and get into some of the more secretive chambers, such as sweaty locker rooms, and return with somewhat realistic conversations that reflect the "gay jock" scene. Amazing.

The Front Runner can be faulted on a number of minor counts, but as a general-reader novel that can be enjoyed by a great number of people--gay, not-yet-gay, non-gay, straight--it stands almost alone so far. As a propagandist, I hope we shall see more books of this type, perhaps books which don't pay as much attention to some of the less characteristic aspects of contemporary gay life, such as "gay marriage" but more validly delineate gay life as it is lived by the average person. **Front Runner**, al-

though a fantasy and a romantic one at that, comes close to reality at times, and I have the feeling that perhaps as Ms. Warren feels more comfortable in gay environs she might relax even more, understand even more, and that we might be seeing some other good novels from her in the future.

Another big "push" book of the year is **Best Little Boy In The World**, an almost mindlessly happy chronicle of the coming-out of someone using the name "John Reid". The use of a pseudonym might lead you to believe that "Reid" is only leaving his closet door open, but the book itself shows that he has been able to overcome the "good child" syndrome without swinging to the other extreme of "Peck's bad boy". **Best Little Boy** is an upbeat book, one that skims along the surface, and is middle-class "hip," if "hip" at all. "Reid" describes his uptight childhood, "romances" with some little ugly and repulsive "girlfriends," the first glimmerings of gayness and the subsequent problems, "crushes" on "Golden Boys," frenetic weekends at Provincetown, and ends up with a personal Declaration of Independence from homophobic bosses. He says he's only going to work in offices where his lovers can ring him on the telephone, openly. To many of us this really isn't much of a free lifestyle but is more like a prisoner agitating for better conditions in the jail, but to millions of people this is "where they are at," so far, and thus I must say that the book, though tame to the likes of me who broke away from the tyranny of the clock in the early 'sixties, is a definite step forward for "John Reid," and perhaps it will inspire some among the millions of others in a similar bind to no longer remain a grey and silent mass but to push quietly for their own rights to live and love. **Best Little Boy**, since it is breezy and cute, could serve as a blues-chaser for those just starting the process of coming out. For others further along it may seem quaint, though I'm almost sure all but the dedicatedly sour-pussed will find it entertaining and even chuckle-producing, on occasion.

This year paperback publishers are beginning to venture into gay literature. This is truly a mass market, since paperbacked books are much less expensive and much more widely distributed. For some years now, there have been gay-aimed paperbacked pornography houses enjoying something of a financial success with what the brochure published by The Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore in New York City calls "trashies." As a result of recent Supreme Court decisions giving local communities the power to prosecute and confiscate "offensive" books, one the best of these houses, Greenleaf Press, has at least temporarily ceased publishing. Greenleaf tried, half-heartedly it seemed, to pioneer "softcore" gay pornographic literature with an accent on some standards of literary excellence. It is unfortunate that this house has been scared out of business, because among the prurient-interest publishers Greenleaf was among the best. But, as I say, their entire approach to the field was fumbling and dis-spirited. It would be a shame if the lower-quality, hardly literate porn publishers are able to continue unharrassed while the higher-aspiring publisher cower and sweat. The worst thing about this situation is that it denies opportunities to struggling writers who were able to publish work of some literary merit.

The overground paperback houses will not take up this slack even though they are beginning to publish books on gay themes. Bantam Books and Warner Paperback Library, for instance, have not yet published books with overtly sexual scenes and there is no reason to believe that they will. As an anti-Puritan, I find this unfortunate because it acts as a subtle form of censorship. And imposes limitations of a restrictive and repressive sort on writers. I still hold, as I did in alternative press newspaper editorials in the sixties, that it is possible for pornography to give birth to a high art, but with the pressures of court decisions and local vigilante groups, it might be some time before courageous publishers are willing to fight the battles for an open and free publishing situation.

Friends is another book written under a pseudonym, an attempt to recount the trials, tribulations and good times of a twenty-five-year male-to-male romance. A book on this subject, one that attempts to be as truthful as possible, has been needed for some time, since most sociological studies show that such long term unions are rare and difficult. "Alexander Douglas" describes himself as a man in his fifties. He's very middle-class, concerned with job prestige, swank apartments in New York's Greenwich Village, summer cottages on Fire Island, buying a house in the country for himself and his lover. He seems to feel that "living well is the best revenge" although he is not acidulous or spiteful. "Douglas" represents a gay generation that accepted the "different" label and all the "you're sick" bigotry and decided not to commit suicide but, rather, screwed up its courage and boldly led its controversial lifestyle, laughing all the way whenever possible. It is a generation that is now in its fifties and sixties and is quite different from the young, somewhat hardened, somewhat politicized generation just coming to manhood. Thus **Friends** serves as a short history and is representative of a transition period that is quite important as a fore-runner to the more "out front" and militant style of the 70's. Readers will find "Douglas" a bit out-of-touch and old-fashioned, a bit of a "rich aunty" with his love of comfort, luxury, and effeteness. This is counterbalanced, somewhat, by the insertion of short notes by his younger lover. **Friends** is a valuable book, frequently irritating to those who take a less materialistic view of the world, but it is a book worth having, even though better books of a more open biographical nature are needed in this vital area, not only as entertainments and historical narratives, but to show the joys and heartaches of real long-term love situations.

Both Bantam and Warner have published gay-theme books recently. Bantam's entry is an anthology called, unfortunately, **Different**, which contains classic homosexual short stories from such authors as Wilde, Lawrence, and de Maupassant, as well as good recent work from

the likes of Vidal, Hansen, and Phil Andros, for whom this represents a rare opportunity to be published by a "prestige" publisher. Although the collection represents itself as being representative of gay fiction, no one anthology can adequately represent the great range of material that should come under such a heading. However, **Different** does a pretty good job of trying and is inexpensive and readily available. I hope it is just the first of, say, a yearly collection of the best in gay fiction.

Warner's has not come forth with anything so prestigious. It tends to be pretty much of an "exploitation" or even "sex-ploitation" house and has given its strong promotional pushes to the adventures of "The Happy Hooker," for instance. Of their first gay-aimed books, one could be interpreted as distorted at best and perhaps anti-gay, if not in intent, at least in effect. **A Year In The Closet**, in addition to its "catchy," "trendy" title, is another one of those murder books. The current spate of such books will give the casual reader the impression that living in a gay community must require life insurance, the hiring of bodyguards, carrying a truncheon or a gun at all times. Gay readers of some experience will laugh at such paranoia, but books like this end up on the all-night yawning newstands of provincial bus stations and do more than a little harm to any understanding of the reality of gay living by the as-yet-uninitiated. The book itself is a mediocre murder mystery without detective set in San Francisco concerning the encounter of a hustler with a middle-class architect with S and M tastes. It is a fairly entertaining book which offers a barely adequate picture of the San Francisco down-and-out hustling scene with some scenes set in a bathhouse and an un-tender encounter between the son of the hustler's deceased client and the protagonist-hustler. This is a genre that Phil Andros handles better than anyone writing and if this is the kind of book Warner Paperback thinks it wants to publish, they should option Andro's next novel rather than publish such inferior gruel. The other Warner book is an account of the misadventures of a teenaged Mexican drag queen in one of those pay-as-you-serve Mexican jails.

Warner sent me this in galleys, indicating to me that they were interested in promoting the book, but when I wrote for a bound copy, since one of the periodicals I review for runs covers as illustrations, I received no response. The galleys are around somewhere, I lost interest in reading the book and frankly can't remember the title. If publishers are expressing such little interest in their products, I don't see why readers and reviewers should knock themselves out to take up the slack. And if paperback houses are going to venture into gay publishing with half a heart, pushing mediocre and inferior works, they are going to fail quickly--and maybe it is just as well. Traditionally, it has been thought that while all gay people are not extremely intelligent, the level of taste and sophistication in the gay world is quite high. If publishers think they are going to aim for "the lowest common denominator," they are sadly mistaken because their books will not be bought. They may be able to rationalize this in various ways, but it is only because they are setting out on the wrong foot, attempting to "cater" (or perhaps "pander" would be a better choice of words) to a "market" they've only recently become aware of and a group they haven't yet begun to understand. If they fail, it might be just as well, because as the success of **The Front Runner** proves, readers, both gay and non-gay will respond to a novel of quality and truth.

Thus far, 1974 is something of a breakthrough year, a year of beginnings, no matter how hasty and ill-advised. The commerciality of publishers will probably keep them looking for the "formulas" and "combinations" to reap the coin of these sex-obsessed times in which homosexuality is becoming not only acceptable but even faddishly fashionable. I have a feeling that next year and the years to come will offer the gay reading public some real surprises, perhaps in the form of books not yet even conceived in the minds of their authors. We shall see.

Rite

BY JON BRACKER

Given to our lovemaking,
you have tightly shut your eyes
and I kiss each lid, deliberate,
so much more tender than before,--
there having come into my mind
what deathwatch fingers do
at the close.

Contributors

DAN ALLEN

is an Associate Professor of English at the City College of San Francisco. He has written many articles on literary figures and is now working on an essay about Thoreau.

ROGER AUSTEN

is a staff member of San Francisco's newspaper THE SENTINEL and acts as coordinator for things gay in the community.

ROBERT BENTLEY

is the author of the novel HERE THERE BE DRAGONS (Ontario Press).

JON BRACKER

is a poet living in San Francisco. His work has appeared in THE NEW BREED: AN ANTHOLOGY OF TEXAS POETS (Prickly Pear Press). A chapbook of his poetry, CONSTELLATIONS OF CLOVER (Prickly Pear Press), has also been published. His edition of the selected poems of Christopher Morley, BRIGHT CAGES (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press), appeared in 1965.

LOUIE CREW

teaches Black Literature at Fort Valley State College in Georgia. He was guest co-editor of the gay COLLEGE ENGLISH.

DANIEL CURZON

is the author of the novel SOMETHING YOU DO IN THE DARK (Putnam, Lancer). He has also published stories in GAY SUNSHINE, VECTOR, and QUORUM, the latter in London. He teaches Creative Writing and American Literature at the State University of California, Fresno.

ROBERT HOPKINS

is a photographer for San Francisco's THE SENTINEL. His work has appeared on the cover of POETRY magazine.

FRANKIE HUCKLENBROICH

is a poet living in Fresno, California. She is a student at the State University there.

TOM McNAMARA

is a reviewer for the alternative press, such as THE SAN FRANCISCO PHOENIX, THE GAY LIBERATOR, and WIN magazine. He teaches Alternative Journalism for Lavender University in San Francisco, and is an associate editor of GAY LITERATURE.

R. BRUCE MOODY

is a New Yorker. He wrote a novel, THE DECLINE AND FALL OF DAPHNE FINN, and has also published work in THE NEW YORKER, LOOK and SHOW.

JEANINE STROEBEL

is a poet living in San Francisco. She is a student at the City College there.

SCOTT WHITNEY

is a counselor for drug abusers, and teaches psychology at the State University of California, Fresno.

ALLEN YOUNG

is an essayist for many newspapers and journals, such as THE ADVOCATE and GAY SUNSHINE. He is the editor, with Karla Jay, of OUT OF THE CLOSETS: VOICES OF GAY LIBERATION (Douglas-Links Books). At present he lives in rural Massachusetts.

IAN YOUNG

is a poet and editor living in Scarborough, Ontario. He is the editor of THE MALE MUSE (Crossing Press), an anthology of poetry.

To A Friend With Paranoia

by Scott Whitney

I've stopped looking for lovers,

I think

Instead, you are an overcoat in my closet

which I've had almost three years now.

I put you on sometimes

and run flapping, delirious,

polysyllabic, through taverns or classrooms.

I want

to pick you up in my arms

and place you

in a cradle, a cave, a womb--

anything,

that would save you from their voices.

